

Current Notes

Vol. 10, No. 10

December 1990

In this issue:

- Latest Atari News
- 8-Bit Mailorder Treasures
- GENie Star*Services
- Their Finest Hour
- Z-Keys
- Desk Top Publishing Hints

ATARI at COMDEX

Tax Deductions for Home Computers

The ATARI Hotz Box

ATARI
Announces
New
MEGA STE
for the
small business
user



Your Monitor on the World of Atari

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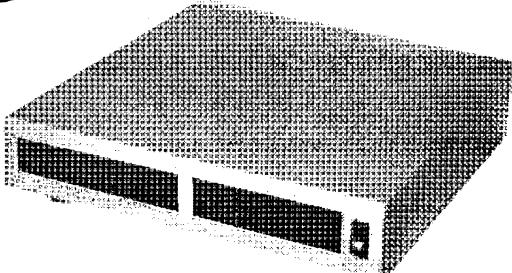
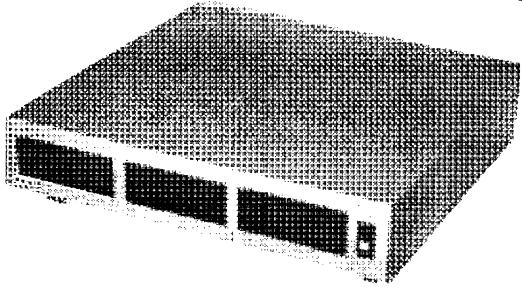
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No surcharge for credit cards. COD add \$3.50 Restocking fee \$10.

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D & P HARD DRIVES



The only enclosures we know of that has the on/off switch up front, where it belongs, and a removable power cord, the others don't! Complete with fan, mounting hardware & 50pin SCSI cable.
Dual monitor hold 2 drives 3.5" or 5.25"
Tri monitor holds 3 - 3.5" all cases \$124.95

Your choice of above enclosure. Complete assembled unit, using *ICD Advantage Plus* host(w/clock) and software, Seagate drive, SCSI cable, and fan! *Ready to plug in and use*. All units have a one year warranty. (Syquest drives 2 Years). Available without clock for \$10 less. This enclosure is of the highest quality, buy ours & buy theirs, if you don't agree, we will take ours back!!!

DRIVES only

ST125N-0 3.5" 20MEGS 40MS- \$255
ST125N-1 3.5" 20MEGS 28MS \$279
ST138N-0 3.5" 30MEGS 40MS- \$285
ST138N-1 3.5" 30MEGS 28MS- \$309
ST157N-0 3.5" 50MEGS 40MS- \$319
ST157N-1 3.5" 50MEGS 28MS- \$345
ST277N-1 5.25" 65MEGS 28MS- \$349
ST296N-1 5.25" 85MEGS 28MS- \$369
ST1096N 3.5" 85MEGS 24MS- \$409
QUANTUM PRO 3.5" 105MEG 19MS - \$567
QUANTUM PRO3.5" 168MEG 15MS - \$800
QUANTUM PRO3.5" 210MEG 15MS - \$872
QUANTUM 3.5" 331 & 425 MEG - CALL
SYQUEST SQ555 & CARTRIDGE- \$585
EXTRA CARTS- \$85ea

Complete systems Ready to use!

20 MEG 28MS- \$494
30 MEG 40MS- \$500
30 MEG 28MS- \$524
* 50 MEG 40MS- \$534
* 50 MEG 28MS- \$560
* 65 MEG 28MS- \$564
* 85 MEG 28MS- \$584
* 85 MEG 24 MS- \$624
* 105 MEG 19MS - \$782
* 168MEG 15MS - \$1015
* 210MEG 15MS - \$1087
SYQUEST 44MEG REMOVABLE- \$779
* Current Notes PD on HD- \$40 (about 40megs)*

SQ555 & HD combinations

30 MEG 40MSEC & 44 - \$1034
30 MEG 28MSEC & 44 - \$1068
50 MEG 40MSEC & 44 - \$1088
50 MEG 28MSEC & 44 - \$1104
65MEG 28MSEC & 44 - \$1118
85MEG 28MSEC & 44 - \$1138
85MEG 24MSEC & 44 - \$1178
105MEG 19MSEC & 44 - \$1366
168MEG 15MSEC & 44 - \$1600
210MEG 15MSEC & 44 - \$1672
DUAL 44MEG SYQUEST - \$1375

Larger drives and other combinations available!

COMPUTERS

1040 STE - call

520FM - call

SM124 mono monitor - \$155

SC1224 color monitor - \$319

PORTFOLIO - call

MODEMS

Modem cable - \$7

Supra 2400 baud modem - \$109

Zoom 2400 baud modem - \$99

US Robotics Courier 2400 - \$299

US Robotics Courier HST 9600Bd - \$599

FLOPPY DRIVES

Master 3S - \$139

Master 3S-D(has track indicator)- \$149

Master 5S (5.25") - \$205

Atari SF314 - \$165

MFD 1080 - \$305

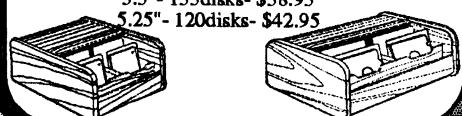
Drive extension cable 6 ft - \$13.95
(Ideal for home brew Blitz cables)

Teakwood Disk Cases

3.5" - 90disks- \$26.95

3.5" - 135disks- \$38.95

5.25" - 120disks- \$42.95



MEMORY UPGRADES

Z-Ram - 2.5 or 4 megs - \$105

(Board w/chips 2.5Megs- \$201 4 Mogs- \$297)

Z-Ram/2.5- 520 ST-2.5Meg - \$100

(Board w/chips 2.5Megs- \$196)

Z-Ram/Mega II - 4Mogs - \$100

(Board w/chips- \$196)

1 Meg 80ns Chips \$6.ea

STE SIMMS (ZUBAIR) - 1meg each - \$65

MISC. ITEMS

AdSpeed (ICD's 16mhz accelerator) - \$270

ATonce IBM emulator - ! call !

Blitz cable w/software - \$46.95

Cordless Mouse (Practical) - \$84

Cleanup ST - \$24.95

Discovery Cartridge (option 0) - \$135

Drive Master - \$32

DVT-VCR hd backup - \$119.95

50pin SCSI dual drive cable 18" - \$10

HP Desk jet printer - \$549

HP Desk jet 500 printer - \$559

ICD Advantage Plus w/clock - \$93.77

ICD Advantage (no clock) - \$83.77

ICD Advantage Micro (Mega's) - \$77

IMG Scan (Seymor-Radix) - \$58

Mega Keyboard Extension 6ft - \$11

Mega Keyboard Extension 8ft - \$12

Mega Keyboard Extension 12ft - \$13

Mega Keyboard Extension 25ft - \$14

MISC. ITEMS

Mega Touch springs - \$9.49

Migraph Hand Scanner (w/Touchup) - \$339

Monitor Master - \$32

Monitor Stand (adjustable) - \$14

Monitor Stand w/power switches - \$45.95

Mouse Master - \$26

Mouse (Atari) - \$48

Mouse (Golden Image) - \$37

Multisynch Monitor (Acer) - \$439

Omniswitch - \$79

PC Speed- \$199 AT Speed- \$359

PC Speed Bridge - \$65

SGS Starter Kit - \$124

SGS Network Node - \$79

Spectre GCR(cart)- \$215

Printer or Modem Cable - \$7

Star NX1000 II 9pin printer - \$169.60

Star NX-2410 24pin printer - \$290

ST/time (under rom clock) - \$43

Supercharger W/1Meg - \$429

Supercharger Power Supply - \$26.95

Supercharger Math coprocessor- \$145

Synchro Express - \$79

TC Power (software for IBM emulators) - \$39.95

Turbol6 Accelerator - \$257

Tweety Board - \$27

Universal Printer Stand - \$13

Video Key - \$59

Vidi ST - \$124.95

Z-Keys (use IBM keyboard) - \$96.95

NEW
LOW PRICE
\$399*

MIGRAPH

At last, a scanner with an artist's touch.

*Suggested retail price.

Here's the hardware-software graphics team you've been waiting for: the Migraph Hand Scanner and Touch-Up® for the Atari ST®.

Our scanner has everything that you expect in a good black-and-white scanner. But it comes with software you've only dreamed about. Until now.

With Migraph's powerful design team, you can produce high-resolution, monochrome scanned graphics — from start to professional finish.

Quality hardware for a strong start.

The Migraph Hand Scanner has the powerful features desktop publishers want most: A scanning window over 4" wide. Four scanning resolutions — 100, 200, true 300, and true 400 dots per inch. Adjustable contrast. Three dither settings for scanning photographs. Plus a special setting for line art.

And that's just for starters.

Powerful software for a dazzling finish.

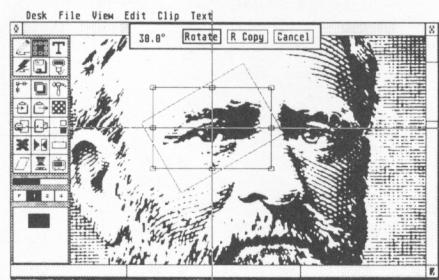
Other scanners come with software that can do a few basic tasks. Our scanner comes with Migraph Touch-Up, the *complete* image editor

and design tool.

Scan, edit, and enhance — even create original images. Touch-Up can do it all.

Its versatile editing functions include all the standard commands, plus powerhouse extras like rotate by degree and scan to clip area.

And Touch-Up is outfitted with a complete



Editing features like rotate by degree give images that professional touch.

paint program, a full set of editing tools, and an array of special effects. It even offers scalable outline fonts in popular typefaces.

Software that just won't quit.

Size is no object for Touch-Up. It can handle images of almost any size and resolution (based on available hard-drive storage space, of course). And its editing tools — which work at all four zoom levels — extend beyond the size of the screen.

Compatibility is Touch-Up's specialty. It imports and exports files in IMG, Degas, PCX, and others. So Touch-Up is compatible with programs like Calamus and PageStream. And you can export images for use on the PC, Mac, and Amiga, too.

The Migraph Hand Scanner and Touch-Up: Powerful tools for professional publishing.

Our scanner is the equal of any in its class. Teamed with Touch-Up, it's in a class all its own. See your dealer today for a great deal.



Ask about our IBM version.

For Atari 1040 ST, Mega 2, and Mega 4 systems with monochrome or color monitors (including the Monterm monitor). Touch-Up also runs on an Atari 520 ST with 1 MB memory and a double-sided disk drive.

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Table of Contents

December 1990

Special Reports

18 Atari Comdex Announcements

Atari Announces 1040STE, Home Computer

Atari Unveils MEGA STE, Business Computer

Atari Introduces TT, 32-bit Graphics Workstation

Atari Introduces Enhanced Graphics User Interface

21 Comdex Impressions

A first hand report on Atari at Comdex. A special report provided courtesy of Z*Net Atari Online Magazine.

--by Terry May

30 Tax Deductions for Home Computers

Have you ever wanted to deduct the cost of your computers? The rules are pretty strict, but maybe you qualify. Ben discusses the requirements and tells about his experiences.

--by Ben Poehland

58 How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Atari?

Experienced users often forget the frustrations faced by a novice. Here are some ideas on how user groups can make themselves more useful to the beginner.

--by Ron Seckinger

72 Atari Industry Announcements

Michtron Goes East

New Super Charger Released

Migraph Lowers Scanner Price

This publication is produced using an Atari Mega ST4, an Atari SM124 monochrome monitor and a Moniterm Viking monitor, a Navarone scanner, and the Atari SLM804 Laser Printer. Most of the output is generated with *Publisher ST*. Some pages, including advertisements, are produced with *PageStream* and others with *Calamus*.

Atari News ♦ Commentary

- **Editorial**, by Joe Waters 4
CN Reader Survey
- **Letters to the Editor** 64
Fixing the HP LG III Problem, I. Eisenschmidt and G. Dupree
NeoDesk CLI for NeoDesk III Users, R. Flashman
Atari Key Chatter, R. Arthur
Several Corrections, M. Loader
Best Article of the Decade, P. Muehlbauer
How to Get Spectre to Print, J. Burkig
CodeHead Corrections, J. Eidsvoog
- **ST Update**, by Frank Sommers 10
Comdex, a success for Atari, Stopping decline of
U.S. market unlikely, New: TOS & GDOS, 14" color monitor, SLM605 & Mega STe
- **Junkyard Pussycat**, by John Barnes 26
GENie Star*Services, ST Aladdin, and GENie Lamp
- **Small World**, by David Small 54
The Hotz Box The next great winner for Atari, maybe, if they only knew what they had.

Departments

- **The 8-Bit Alchemist**, by Ben Poehland 14
The Twilight Market: Mailorder sources for 8-bit stuff
- **Myths and Mysteries**, by Dave Troy 38
Ten Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth
- **Shareware Sampler**, by Brian Miller 68
Me First! No, Me First!
- **Small Miracles**, by Frank Kweder 64
Visions 10, Visions 15, Starwebs, Stargate
- **ST Toolbox**, by J. Andrzej Wrotniak 35
Squishing and Unzipping A better DC Squish, a better G+Plus, and AW Printer Setter
- **Starting Block**, by Richard A. Gunter 24
Seasonal Reflections. Some suggestions for Christmas gifts for the Atari user
- **Suck in a Rut**, by Sam Wright 66
The Hound of Shadow

Product Reviews

- **Day of the Viper**, by Alfred Giovetti 48
Arcade action and exploration in the 24th century.
- **Hoyle's Book of Games**, by Don Elmore 62
"not exactly according to"
- **Risk**, by George Hulseman 51
A board game superbly translated
- **Their Finest Hour**, by Mike Heininger 42
The Battle of Britain--the best air war simulation?
- **Wayne Gretzky Hockey**, by George Hulseman 56
If you like sports simulations, here's one you shouldn't miss
- **Z-Keys**, by Sam Van Wyck 46
Connect an IBM style keyboard to your ST

New this month! Meet **A Yooza**, a creation of Rick Keene. A. Yooza will join us each month to provide his own unique insights into the world of an Atari user. Page 76.

KEY:

- ST-related review or article.
- XE/XL related review or article.
- Machine independent article.



by Joe Waters

CN Reader Survey

Those of you who have renewed recently know that we have started including a one-page survey form with the renewal notice. The form gives us some information about the peripheral equipment CN readers have and their preferences for software. Since the fall of 1988, our subscription/renewal forms have asked readers to indicate the kinds of computers they have so we have developed a sizeable database on this topic. This month, I would like to share some interesting insights about you, the CN readers.

Let's look first at the distribution of computers. Who owns 8-bits and who owns STs? For two years CN has collected information about the kind of machine(s) our readers own. This sample, which amounts to nearly 1,400 observations (almost 60 percent of our subscriber base), is very large, although not necessarily a snapshot in time as to what everybody has right now. It does get updated, but normally only on an annual basis when a reader renews. Therefore, the purchase of a new machine (Stacy, STE) won't show up in this data for some time. Nonetheless, it does give one a good idea of the computers owned by our readers.

Nearly 93 percent of our readers own an ST class machine (520ST, 1040ST, MEGA2, MEGA4, STACY, STE) and 37 percent own 8-bit Atari's. The numbers do not sum to 100 because 30 percent of the readers have both machines. The percentage of readers who have only one or more 8-bits is only 7 percent.

Notice that I said "one or more" 8-bits. Quite a few Atari owners own many Atari's. If we mix together the STs and 8-bits, we find that the majority, 59%, have only one computer (55% ST and 4% 8-bit). However, 23% of CN readers own two computers; 11% own three computers; 5% own four computers; 2% (31 people) own five or more computers. It is also interesting to look at the distribution of the "STs." The 1040ST makes up 52% of all the "STs" owned. The low-end 520ST comprises another 29%. The Megas, equally split between the MEGA2 and the MEGA4, account for 19%. The newer Stacy and STE make up less than 1 percent of the total.

The new CN survey form gives us information on software and peripherals owned by our readers. We only have 95 responses to date, but that certainly is enough to give us some interesting information. First of all, 98 percent of the respondents have a double-sided disk drive. This will have important consequences as CN plans new library disks for next year. If you are one of the few who only have a SS drive, perhaps you ought to upgrade for Christmas.

How about monitors? Color is in 94% of the houses and monochrome in 75%. Two out of three respondents had both monitors! Only 6% had only monochrome.

Nearly everyone (98%) has a printer. Most readers have only one printer, but 29 respondents had two or more. Three-quarters of the printers are dot matrix, 22% inkjet, and 16% laser. Most of the dot-matrix printers are 9-pin, only 11 people had a 24-pin dot matrix. In the laser category, only 6 people had an Atari SLM804 laser while 9 readers had a different brand laser printer.

Modems are also very popular. 2400 baud is the most common. Sixty-five people owned 2400 baud while 40 readers had 1200 baud (15 respondents had both 1200 and 2400 baud modems.)

Are you thinking of buying a hard drive? Three quarters of your fellow Atarians already own one. Six people owned the newer cartridge hard drives.

I was surprised by the emulator figures. How many people have PC emulators and how many have a Macintosh emulator? Over one-half of the respondents owned a PC emulator while one-third owned a Macintosh emulator. Atari has ports built in for a MIDI interface. How many owners actually own a MIDI instrument? Thirty-five percent of this initial survey did. Scanners were also surprisingly popular with 20% of the readers owning a scanner. Nobody, so far, owns a tape backup or a CD-ROM drive.

How about critical software. We asked our readers, "If you could keep only six programs, what would they be?" Not everybody provided six answers, some didn't provide any answers. But of those who did, we aggregated the results to find out which programs were mentioned most frequently. The top 15 recommendations are shown in the table below along with the number of people (out of 95) who made that recommendation. You will note that the most important programs are all productivity programs. Only one game, *Dungeon Master*, made the top 15 list.

Most Recommended ST Programs

1. WordPerfect	31
2. PageStream	21
3. Flash	20
4. NeoDesk	18
5. WordWriter ST	16
6. ST Writer	14
7. LDW Power	13
8. Universal Item Selector	13
9. Timeworks Publisher ST	12
10. Degas Elite	11
11. GFA Basic	10
12. Calamus	9
13. Data Manager ST	9
14. dBMAN	9
15. Dungeon Master	9

As we continue to get information in from our readers, we will continue to update this list. I hope you find the information interesting and informative.

Entertainment

□ Adv Dungeons and Dragons	\$29.99
□ Axe of Rage	\$29.99
□ Battle Chess	\$35.99
□ Bloodwyrm w/ata disk	\$19.99
□ Boulder Dash Const. Kit	\$1.99
□ Bubble Bobble	\$19.99
□ California Games	\$14.99
□ Conquest of Camelot	\$39.99
□ Demon Wiener	\$1.99
□ Dive Bomber	\$21.99
□ Devon Aire	\$17.99
□ Double Dragon	\$29.99
□ Dragon's Lair	\$39.99
□ Drakkhen	\$25.99
□ Dungeon Master I or II	\$39.99
□ Dungeon Slayer	\$39.99
□ Empire	\$39.99
□ F-16 Combat Pilot	\$35.99
□ F-19 Stealth Fighter	\$39.99
□ F-40 Pursuit	\$19.99
□ Falcon	\$32.99
□ Falcon Mission Disk #1 or #2	\$19.99
□ Fighter Bomber	\$37.99
□ Gauntlet II	\$19.99
□ King's Quest IV	\$39.99
□ Kult	\$39.99
□ Leisure Suit Larry I, II, or III	\$9.99
□ Obliterator	\$27.99
□ OIDS	\$32.99
□ Omega	\$32.99
□ Phantasy L, II, or III	\$19.99
□ Populus	\$35.99
□ Populus Data Disk	\$35.99
□ Project Neptune	\$19.99
□ Red Storm Rising	\$12.99
□ Space Ace	\$39.99
□ Space Quest I, II, or III	\$35.99
□ Space Station Oblivion	\$19.99
□ Star Command	\$9.99
□ Star Fleet I	\$37.99
□ Starflight	\$39.99
□ Stellar Crusade	19.99
□ Superman - Man of Steel	\$9.99
□ The Final Battle	\$39.99
□ Time of Love	\$29.99
□ Turbo Outrun	\$27.99
□ Ultima IV & V	\$9.99
□ Worklock	\$39.99
□ Worship	
□ Xenomorph	

ST Selections

Be sure to put a gift from L&Y

on your Christmas Wish List

□ * 520 ST or 1040 ST
2 Mag Upgrade INSTALLED
4 Meg Upgrade INSTALLED

'Price varies due to Ram Prices

old style 520 ST/1040 Boards

□ Fast 16 Accelerator Board

□ PC Speed Installed

□ SPECIAL 1040 STe

□ CML Board

□ 520 ST Upgrade to 1 Mb

Installed

\$125.99

\$35.99

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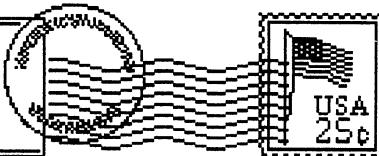
\$125.99

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\$125.99

\$35.99

Letters to the Editor



Fixing the HP LJ III Problem

Dear Mr. Waters:

Hello; let me introduce myself. My name is Ike Eisenschmidt and I am the Technical Manager at Transcoast Systems, Inc. in San Francisco, CA. We sell Atari desktop publishing solutions to the print industry.

The Hewlett Packard LaserJet III provides vast resolution improvements over any 300 dpi laser printer on the market. We have found that its quality compares favorably to other high resolution printers costing 3 to 4 times the amount of the HPLJ III. There is, however, a stumbling block that may cause those inexperienced with the HP some problems.

The major complaint voiced by Dennis J. O'Boyle in his review in the October 1990 issue is that the unit he bought did not work with his ST, while the floor model did. He and HP could not find any difference between the model that worked and the one that didn't. For some reason, some of the HP III's have problems with the ST's parallel signal and don't respond to the ST's output.

The solution is simple and effective. Installing a Radio Shack Printer Extender, part #26-2840, for \$29.95 will solve this problem. It is easy to install on the parallel socket. This effectively boosts the parallel signal enough so that any problem HP will work. It is best to install the extender on ST side to avoid amplifying any noise picked up in the printer cable.

Ike Eisenschmidt
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mr. O'Boyle:

I just read your article on the Hewlett Packard Laser Jet III in *Current Notes*, October 1990. I also have an HP Laser Jet III printer which I use on my Atari 1040ST. I bought it to use with PageStream. After a lot of research into other laser printers, I chose the HP. It was more money than some, but much better print quality was easy to see. The Atari SLM was going to cost me more in the long run because of having to buy more memory for my computer and UltraScript. Also the fear of running out of toner or needing a new drum with the SLM made me wary of buying it since so often the dealers say "sorry, we just sold the last (you fill in the blank), but we are ordering soon" (when is soon?) or "Atari said they would be shipping soon." That one is really scary!

Like you, I laid out the money, \$1,599 - with toner and a free \$32 cable (finally, I got a better deal!) and brought my brand new, unopened HPIII to my office. That's when my troubles began, too. After losing a few pounds from perspiring and much more than a few winks, the problems were getting solved.

1) I knew from the PageStream printer information I'd

need more memory for the HP, so I bought Ramjet Plus with a meg of memory. Under \$200.

2) After talking to Soft Logic, Atari, HP, and my local Atari dealer, Island Computer in Middle Island, NY, I found out that some Atari ST's need a print buffer to operate laser printers (not just HP). So, more money, \$89 for Practical Peripherals 32K MicrobufferMini.

3) So now I'm working fine with PageStream, VIP Professional, and Word Writer ST. And I'm happy, except I want BETTER print and I want it faster than 8-10 minutes for PageStream documents.

4) I see a Postscript cartridge in a DTP magazine from ImageSoft in Port Washington, NY. It's advertised for \$350, about the same as Pacific Data and some others (HP is over \$500). So, I called them for info. "What kind of computer do you have?" they ask. I mumble Atari ST, and get the usual "oh" answer and they don't promise it will work. Then the guy offers a free trial for 30 days, if I like it, send him \$299 instead of \$350. I guess their sales are slow. So, I give him my VISA number, just for security, after all we both live in NY, and a week later it's in my printer and guess what, IT WORKS! And FAST! What was taking 10 minutes for PageStream now takes less than 2 minutes. Not only that, it really does look better than the print without this neat new cartridge. It does not work with WordWriter or VIP.

5) My HP was also made in March 1990, and with PageStream I can't get 8.5x14 either, even with my new PostScript Cart. It does work in 8.5x14 with WordWriter though. Maybe it is PageStream.

So with a print buffer, I got it to work. Why, I don't know, but it works. I hope that little bit of information helps you or someone else. By the way, in April I DID tell them at SoftLogic about the print buffer working. Maybe they forgot.

Sorry for the many words and poor grammar (do you know of a good grammar checker for the ST?).

Rev. George M. Dupree
Riverhead, NY

NeoDesk CLI for NeoDesk III Users

Dear Mr. Sommers,

Having recently read the article "The New Look in CLIs," I felt that I should respond to some of the minor points in it which require some clarification. I should state that on the most part I found the review very readable and enjoyable.

The price of the NeoDesk CLI is \$29.95, this price is printed in the outside of the manual itself. The NeoDesk CLI is intended as an add on for those users who are already running our NeoDesk desktop replacement package. Its actual memory usage is around 45K of memory, making it the smallest choice available for current NeoDesk users.

While the NeoDesk CLI does not currently allow "Aliasing" in the same way that Gulam does, it does allow for variables to be directly executed from the command line. This would allow for a similar effect to the one demonstrated with Gulam:

```
> set cd c:\tempus.prg  
> $ed file.ext
```

I am confused by the benchmarks on scrollingspeed. Our own benchmarks show that it can scroll as fast as normal

TOS text output (which is what Gulam uses). In some cases, like when a Moniterm Viking is used, it can go faster. According to that, the NeoDesk CLI should have received a "Fast" or "V.Fast" rating for scroll speed. One possible test would be to display a large text file in each CLI (from a ramdisk) and time the different display times.

Finally, I would like to say that we are currently working on an upgrade to the NeoDesk CLI. This upgrade will have many of the suggestions of the users and the reviewer, including:

- 1) Full history retrieval.
- 2) Configurable scrollback buffer (using window scrollbar).
- 3) Complete string handling functions.
- 4) Ability to run TOS programs inside the CLI window (a toggle).
- 5) Subroutine access functions.

I thank you very much for your attention. I have always enjoyed your fine magazine and its clear and accurate reporting.

Rick Flashman
Gribnif Software
Hadley, MA

Atari Key Chatter

Dear Richard,

In your Starting Block column in the June, 1990 issue of *Current Notes*, you mentioned the faster boot achieved when a formatted disk was contained in drive A. This is, of course, true. I discovered another phenomenon with this procedure.

My Mega 4 was plagued with a key chatter problem. This occurred in random programs and at random times, but was most prevalent when using Word Perfect. The symptoms were the same as having depressed and held the ESC key. The only way the chatter could be stopped was by depressing another key, any key. When this happened in Word Perfect, the screen displayed the menu for entering the number of repeat counts. If it occurred during a desktop display the current drive menu cycled repeatedly for the number of times the chatter had repeated before it was stopped. Needless to say, this was very frustrating. My computer was checked at a repair facility several times but no reason for the problem was discovered. In fact, they reported that they could not duplicate the problem at all!

Finally, I stumbled on a coincidence. When I booted the computer with a disk in drive A, I did not have the chatter problem... or at least it occurred far less frequently. I have no answer as to why this happens, but I am certainly thankful to end this most frustrating experience. I haven't heard of anyone else having this problem, but there could well be someone who could benefit from this solution.

Thanks for your fine column in an excellent magazine.

Raymond F. Arthur
San Jose, CA

Dear Ray,

I'd never made the connection between the key chatter phenomenon and an empty floppy drive. Nor have I heard any satisfactory explanation for the key chatter.

I first experienced it at the Northern VA AtariFest two years ago, at the Atari booth, of all places. I was running a

demonstration of a Mega 4 equipped with Revolver and it happened to me several times. I asked the Atari rep about the chatter and he muttered something that suggested he didn't know what caused it either. He did know how to end the racket...

I've seen it on my Mega 2, so it's definitely real and not a hardware defect. I can't confirm whether Word Perfect is more prone to it than other applications. It seems more likely to happen on my system if I'm tinkering with the mouse at boot time, but that, too, is conjecture.

A connection between the key chatter and the floppy drive wouldn't be surprising, though--there are I/O operations going on at a low level in TOS, and perhaps an obscure interference situation is to blame. You've furnished a useful clue, if anyone were trying to find the bug (which I doubt). I'll pass the info along to the readers. Anything that helps suppress such nuisances is valuable.

Thanks for the input, and for the kind words about *Current Notes* and the Starting Block.

Richard Gunter
Herndon, VA

Several Corrections

Dear Mr. Waters,

John Barnes writes in the June 90 *Current Notes* that Darek Mihocka did not want to register as a developer, but that other developers stated that the new developer program was worth it. Maybe in the US, but in Canada, Atari has no developer program to speak of. They do not send out newsletters, information, or software. Atari Corp. will not let Canadian developers transfer their registration to Atari US and will not forward US newsletters and developer information to Canadian developers. Darek should save his money.

Richard Gunter mentions how to print on both sides of the paper with a SLM804. This is fine for occasional documents, but should not be done on a regular basis as the toner from the other side can break off and cause problems.

Steven Rudolph writes that colors keep disappearing on the screen in PageStream. This is because the screen color tagged to that actual color is the same as the background color. The ST is not capable of displaying the trillions of colors PageStream can define, so real colors must be represented by the limited screen colors. Simply change the tagged color in the "Change Screen Colors" dialog box. This is explained on page 11.10 and is mentioned in the troubleshooting section on page 1.7 of the PageStream 1.8 manual. Steven also writes that changing the colors of a group does not work. Grouped objects must be ungrouped before changing object attributes; however, multiple objects may be selected and changed at once. This is explained on page 8.2 of the 1.8 manual.

Bill Price writes in the May 90 issue that PageStream fonts are "not the quality of Adobe's PostScript fonts" and that "Calamus fonts are a substantial leap in quality above those of PageStream." PageStream 2.0, which will be shipping for the Amiga in August and shortly for the ST, uses all the major font standards. PageStream 2 can use Compugraphic Intellifont hinted outline fonts for the best possible output on non-PostScript printers. Calamus uses an earlier non-hinted version of AGFA font technology and

cannot use Compugraphic format fonts from other sources. PostScript Type 1 and 3 fonts from any source may also be used with PageStream 2. Type 1 fonts are rendered as outlines on screen, as are Compugraphic and PageStream fonts, and may even be printed to non-PostScript printers. PageStream 2 combines the power of Adobe Type Manager with a wide range of font technologies.

Mike Loader
Lazo, B.C., Canada

Best Article of the Decade

Dear Joe,

I just received my July/August issue of *Current Notes* I really must commend you on the good look of the whole magazine. Not that it ever looked bad, mind you, but it really looks sharp this month, from cover to cover. Your layout is really nice. And even all the ads look great! Normally an ad is an ad, but every ad looks fresh, new, and inviting. I imagine everyone submits their own ads, and they should receive the pat on the back, but this will have to suffice. Good job on a good looking issue!

Also, I would like to nominate "No Gloom Zone" by David Small as the best article of the decade in ANY Atari magazine. (I know, the decade is only seven months old, but it's the best thing I've read in ten years...) I liked it because it gives some PERSPECTIVE to the computer market place, something that I haven't seen in a long time. Back in the good old days, computer magazines covered ALL the computers. Now it seems every magazine has specialized on one or two brands. That is ok, as far as it goes. But it is hard to keep a perspective of what is going on in the industry as a whole. I read Macintosh magazines that talk about corporate Apple in the same way Atari magazines talk about corporate Atari. And I read many more negative things about IBM than positive things. (Even as "everybody" buys an IBM.) But since I read four to five Atari magazines a month, I rarely read about Apple or IBM or Commodore any more.

Back when Computer Shopper was a real computer magazine, it was interesting to read each editor's opinions of the various computer manufacturers. Several years ago there was a computer magazine that had a page or two devoted to news highlights of the corporate goings-on of the major computer manufacturers. I always enjoyed that page, it was the first thing I read. It is nice to know what each company is up to, the good things and the blunders they are making. I always thought that would make a good regular feature for your or any other magazine. Of course, it is hard to keep on top of several companies each month, so it might not be feasible. But, a good idea, I think.

Anyhow, you sure put out a nice issue. Keep up the good work. Bye,

Paul Muehlbauer
New Ulm, MN

How to Get Spectre to Print?

Dear Sirs:

I would like to ask you for any source of help you can suggest in getting a printout using the Spectre GCR. I recently bought a copy of Printworks for Dot matrix (Ver

3.2) in the hope that I would be able to print things, but have had only bad luck with it, although I believe I have followed the instructions, and I have tried every variation I could think of beyond the instructions. I have a Star Micronics NX2400 printer and I put the driver for the Epson LQ in the system folder. If I then go to the CHOOSER and click on the printer icon, the system locks up with the little wrist watch cursor frozen in place, and when operating from floppy, the disk drive permanently on. I tried System 3.2/Finder 5.3 and System 4.2/Finder 6.0 with similar results for both, although with the second combination I could not get into Mac mode until I had replaced the System file on the hard disk. I wrote a letter to Softstyle in Hawaii, but apparently they have moved or disappeared and my letter was returned. I wrote to Gadgets by Small and got an answer from Dave Wheeler, but it wasn't much help. I also talked to the computer store where I bought the software, but so far they have not been of much help, either with suggestions or a new address. Since I do not have access to the bulletin boards, I am operating in a sort of vacuum and hope you, who probably have closer contacts, may have a useful suggestion. My system is a 1040ST with Z-Ram upgrade to 4MB, ICD Fast hard disk with a 48 MB Seagate drive, mono and color monitors, and the Star Micronics NX2400 printer.

Thank you for any help you can give with the Spectre GCR printing problem.

Jack Burkig
Reno, NV

[This is one of the more frequently asked questions we get. How does one get Spectre GCR to print to non-Apple printers? The Epstart program from Soft-Style did, indeed, work. However, SoftStyle is out of business. I purchased MacPrint from Insight Development Corporation to get an HP driver. However, I ran into the same kind of problems you encountered and could not get MacPrint to work on the Spectre GCR. Yet, I know people have said they have no trouble printing with the Spectre. Well, Spectre experts, who is going to tell us all what exactly does work, where can people get the program, and how they make it work? If anyone has the answer, do right in and share it with the rest of us. -JW]

CodeHead Corrections

Frank Sommers

We are writing to clarify some incorrect statements which were printed in your October 1990 issue regarding our software. The article in question is called "Doing Things A Different Way" and is a description of three of our software products by J. Andrzej Wrotniak. Although the overall tone of the column is positive, we must contest some of the misinformation that the article contains.

The first and most damaging error occurs when our program, MultiFile, is referred to as freeware. This is totally wrong. MultiFile is a file utility which is included in our CodeHead Utilities package, a commercial product. This can be verified by simply opening the "More" box where it clearly states "Copyright 1989 CodeHead Software, Part of

CodeHead Utilities." MultiFile has never been released as freeware or shareware and one can only guess as to how Mr. Wrotniak came to be mistaken about this.

The article goes on to explain two minor complaints about HotWire which are both unfounded. Mr. Wrotniak wishes that there were an icon to call the File Selector directly from HotWire's main screen (to access some alternately available disk functions). In fact, there are many ways to call the File Selector. The easiest way is by simply pressing F7 or clicking on the "runningman" whereupon the File Selector will appear to let you choose a program to run. The File Selector can also be called by pressing F1, F2, by clicking on either the Load or Save icons, or by clicking on any blank entry in the HotWire menu. It's amazing that he didn't stumble on at least one of these methods.

Mr. Wrotniak next explains how selecting either the MaxiFile or the MultiDesk icon allows it to be run as a program if it is not currently installed as an accessory and that HotWire allows you to locate it if it cannot be found in the default directory. But he complains that these locations are "not saved with the settings file." In fact, you can locate the programs in this manner or by using the appropriate selections in the "HotWire System Paths" box. Either way that you specify these paths, the locations ARE saved when you save the "ConfigurationSettings." The paths are saved directly into the HotWire program.

There is one other comment that we take exception to and that is "you will not find much (if any) use for [HotWire] on a floppy-based system." This is just not true. We have many users with floppy-only systems who love HotWire. In fact, a floppy user may actually save more time than a hard drive user since he no longer must double-click on floppy drive icons and wait for a window to open up. He can simply insert the disk in the drive and hit a key to run the program... it couldn't be simpler.

As mentioned above, the overall message from the article is positive toward our software (even though Mr. Wrotniak shows his bias by repeatedly referring to competing products). But we feel we must refute statements which are (unknowingly) false. We are quite able to accept just criticism of our software and often take advantage of these suggestions to improve upon it. However, it is very frustrating to read complaints about a lack of features which we have actually taken the time and effort to implement.

John Eidsvoog
Charles F. Johnson
CodeHead Software

Sorry about confusing *MultiFile* with freeware. It has been more than a year since I have last used it, and I just remembered it as a subset of *MaxiFile*. Scaled-down versions of commercial programs are often offered for free, and that was the reason for my confusion (well, at least I haven't written that Darek Mihocka was the author!). Of course, *MultiFile* is a part of the *CodeHead Utilities* and I hope I have not encouraged anybody to pirate it.

About the two technical complaints I have raised in my write-up of *Hotwire* (1) Clicking on the "Running Man" icon will, in fact, bring up the currently installed file selector, which comes out with the ".**" template, which makes it immediately useful for any file operations (as opposed to the

call via the disk icon, where the selector comes up with a ".HOT" template which has to be changed).

On the other hand, a "dummy" selector (with the result just ignored) has one advantage. I caught myself more than once running a program by accident (or trying to run a non-program file) by double-clicking rather than clicking on a directory entry I was about to use for some other purpose. I still think a separate file selector icon could be of some help for those of us with less feeling in their fingertips. It would offer extra protection from accidental goofs--for a very small price in terms of complication of your program.

(2) About the saving of *MaxiFile* and *MultiDesk* locations: you got me on this one. What I was doing wrong, was just saving the .HOT file by clicking on the disk icon, instead of going to the configuration menu. I think I was slightly confused by having two somewhat similar operations in two different locations with no textual re-enforcement of the disk icon, and I just thought (running the program without the manual on my knees) that clicking on the disk icon saves all the information.Oops.

To avoid further hairsplitting on my part, and for the benefit of those who have not read my original review: these were, indeed, minor complaints and I could only wish more programs were meeting your standards.

About using *HotWire* on a floppy-based ST: the gains in efficiency and convenience seem to be negligible as compared to the case of a hard drive system. This, of course, is to some extent a matter of personal preferences, so I am not surprised that some of your users may have a different opinion on the subject. I am also very happy they wrote you about it.

And finally, the "bias" issue. Is this not a misunderstanding? Mentioning the "competing products" in the review (I believe you mean *Universal Item Selector* and *NeoDesk* here) seems to me a perfectly natural thing: these programs offer many functions similar to *MaxiFile* and *HotWire*; they require smaller changes in the user's working habits (when moving from the GEM desktop and File Selector), and pretending they donot exist would not make the article more objective. Every time something is being done differently than before, we are asking ourselves a natural question why, and comparisons with the more orthodox solutions become hard to avoid.

As I made it clear in the review, in some points your programs have advantages over the competition, in some others (including the upward compatibility, but not only that) the competition has the upper hand--personal preferences may play a large role in the final choice. From my (possibly naive) viewpoint, failing to say that the reviewed product is the greatest thing since the apple pie, regardless of the alternatives, does not quite deserve being called a bias.

Keep up the good work, and I will do my best on this side,

J. Andrzej Wrotniak

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Comdex, A Success for Atari, Stopping Decline Of U.S. Market Unlikely, New: TOS & GDOS, 14" Color Monitor, SLM 605 & Mega STe

Paris Is Not for Burning ... Nor Is Elie

Sam Tramiel was there. So was Jack. It was the Paris Atari show, the 3rd week of October. Elie Kenan, former head of Atari, France, before he became President, Atari North America, was back for the show, and back as President of Atari, France. Purportedly, after he and Jack had disagreed and agreed to agree no more, Elie believed his "agreement" with Jack Tramiel, that he would have full authority to execute his position, had been violated. Nobody was present at their conversation which took place after Elie had gone to Boston, following the WAACE Atari Fest to look at a site suitable for Atari's computer and marketing operations. Nobody appears to know whether Jack and Elie had previously discussed the desirability of moving part of Atari to the East Coast. But the inside inside word/rumor is that the expenses that would be incurred in moving and setting up the new operation, plus the continuing extra expense of running two facilities was too much, just too much for Jack to swallow. So, the Parisian gentleman that Elie is caused him to graciously depart Atari and return to France, where his success in turning Atari into a profitable operation is known and accepted and where he is the headman. Adieu, Monsieur Kenan.

Ignorance or Apathy

What does Kenan's departure mean for Atari. Nobody can be certain that he would have been the "miracle worker" he was touted to be. There are few footprints left behind that give any clue of how and where he would have headed to resuscitate the prostrate Atari, U.S. It is unlikely that we will ever know all

the details of what finally tore it. What is becoming clearer, however, is that Atari's long evident "death wish" for its U.S. company is now going to be fulfilled. Its stock is hovering, like a barely-pinging hospital life-signs monitor, around the \$2 mark, threatening to become a penny stock. Its before tax loss in

gests that their answer to that question would be, "We don't know, and we don't care."

Thus, there is no inclination apparent at Atari to change its image, to tell the American market that Atari actually has some excellent computers to sell, to convince dealer candidates and existing dealers that it means what it says, and intends to do a turnaround on its moribund marketing practices. So, as Christmas approaches, 'tis with heavy heart that we have watched this Year of Atari, likely its last Christmas before it implodes, and slowly blows away from our land. Just be glad that you already have your machine, whichever one it is, knowing that it is one of the better computers around. It will live on and deliver you much pleasure with a reasonable supply of software from abroad to enhance it, along with occasional items from U.S. developers, who are also plying the European market. This should last until new machines from Mac and IBM cover it with the dust of obsolescence. The latest "inexpensive" Mac and IBM computer series for the home don't appear to do this, i.e. turn your ST into a dinosaur. For at least another year, and possibly two, your STs, in one form or another, will serve you as well as anything else out there.

And so the curtain starts its decent on a proud machine.

Comdex, Atari's Last Hurrah

Any obituary for Atari, U.S. is even sadder when you hear and read about Comdex. The TT's, retailing at less than \$3,000, in various configurations were impressive with their big Phillips 19" monitors. When backed up by the introduction of the Mega STE's with their \$399



the third quarter was \$6 million plus; carry forward tax loss credits, presumably from the Federated disaster turns that into a \$3 million after tax profit. The few remaining dealers are turning up their toes with increasing speed. There is little left in the doctor's bag to work a miracle on the patient. The TT is far too expensive to become a broad-based home computer and Atari has lacked either the skill or the will, or both, to open up other market niches. The TT also has greater competition in terms of capabilities and cost than did the ST, with its dazzling color and power and eye-snatching desktop windows, when it arrived half a decade ago.

As Elie left the scene, we could not help but wonder, how could a machine as good as Atari's die of starvation in a market as rich as the American market? What is the core of the problem? Is it ignorance or apathy? Atari's track record sug-

14 inch color monitors (if sold separately), you realized, once again, that Atari had a product line that could do well here. Sam Tramiel announced it: A graphic work station, the TT; a business machine, the Mega STE; and a personal computer, the 1040 STE. There was also going to be an exciting new (FMS) GDOS, more powerful, but even more difficult to install! It would allow you to scale the size of your fonts. NewDesk, along with the equivalent of TOS 3.0, for the TT would also be available for the Mega STE. (See TT Menu windows.) There would be a local area network capability. Sam announced, "We designed the Mega STE for the serious business professional. You'll see the difference the minute you see the system's new case design, and you'll feel the difference from the moment you turn the system on." Selling at \$1,800 with a mono monitor, 2 meg of memory, and a 50 meg hard drive, it could be a serious competitor.

Except that Atari has tried for 48 months to penetrate the small business market and failed for want of the business community knowing they existed. Atari had more floor space in the new Sands convention area than it has ever had and more than practically any of the other vendors in the Sands, except JVC. Its intention was to show the world that it was alive, well, and ready to prosper. Unfortunately, most of the U.S. world that hadn't heard of the Atari line was unlikely to, and those who had were of the opinion that Atari was dead in the U.S. In talking to Simon Schuster's Prentis Hall Press, who last year had put out the tax program, *Tax Advantage*, for the ST as well as the IBM and compatibles, one of the office personnel, when asked whether they would support the ST again this year, "No, I don't think so. You know Atari is.... well, sort of out of it now." (*Tax*

Advantage, created by Harry Koonz and Double Eagle Software was a premier program for the ST. Hundreds of people will look at their tax forms this coming year and bemoan its passing. When contacted, Koonz acknowledged it was sad, but noted that people have to move on.)

Comdex, What Was New & Ready Now?

The first "downer" was the gradual awareness throughout the Atari throng that Atari's "flexible promise program" was just as flexible as it had always been. In the summer, Atari announced that no TT's were to be seen in public until

Desk	File	View	Extras
Desktop Control Field	Open... [O] Show Info... [S] Search... [L] Delete Reposition... [F] Close... [B] Close Window [C] Switch Window [W] Select All [E] Hide File [X] Format...	Ikon Text Index by Name Index by Date Index by Size Index by Type No Indexing Foreground Background	Ikon Selection Change Selection Select Drive Remove Ikon [R] .INF-Read Data... Config Desktop [M] Lock File [V] Hardcopy [P] Cache

The TT's Menu Windows -- A New Desktop -- TOS 3.0

Comdex, when the TT's would be shipped the Monday following Comdex. Atari's "new policy" was that no new products would be announced until they were ready to ship. Actually, at the time, Atari was "crossing its fingers" and hoping that FCC approval would be available in time. It wasn't. The TT announced at last year's Comdex still had no FCC approval. Hopefully, as you read this, it now has. Atari, while seeking an image transformation was still at it, disfiguring its image. Unrelentingly.

If Atari was announcing products that you couldn't buy, third party suppliers were active. A quick review. Zephyr Development of Berkeley, CA was offering optical character reader software, *Sherlook*, that can read one font for \$189 or 22 on the same page for \$789. It turns an .img picture of text into an

ASCII file that can then be manipulated the way you can any text. *Hyperlink* for the ST, the data base application interface program that has caused such a stir on the Macintosh. STEFax from Zephyr Development in Berkeley, CA, was a Comdex hit. A combination scanner, printer, FAX, and copier for \$745, will be ready for Xmas. Then there was "Xoterix"! What? Xoterix, the miniature 20 meg hard drive that fits right under the Portfolio. Nevin Shalitt was successfully promoting his *Tracker/ST*, and also introducing a sales tickler enhancement for it. Migraph attracted attention with talk of a color hand scanner, first for the

IBM and the Amiga, and then the ST, for \$800. The SLM605, at \$1395, was compact, noticeably no slower than the SLM804, despite its 6 ppm rating, and perfect output.

The announcements of "bundling" packages and prices had considerable appeal. A few of the more interesting:

520STFM Home Entertainment Pack: 520STFM, *Missile Command*, *Star Raiders*, *Crack'd*, *Moon Patrol*, *Neochrome*, *Joust* (Retail: \$579.65).

1040STE Home Print Shop Bundle: Computer, Migraph Hand Scanner, *Touch-Up*, *Easy Draw 3.0*. (Retail: \$1,398.90).

DTP Package #1: Mega 2 computer, SM124 Mono Monitor, Megafile 30 hard drive, SLM605 Laser Printer, *Calamus* (Retail: \$2,199.00).

New SC1435 Color Monitor, 14" screen, Stereo Sound, swivel/tilt stand (Retail: \$399.00).

But maybe the most exciting thing going on at Comdex was Atari's behind the scenes interviewing of candidates for management positions for the company. By some estimates, there are now five major jobs open. Greg Pratt, Kenan's replacement, and former CFO, seems to be dedicated to bringing

the ST platform to the forefront of Atari's computer business. If this is correct, and he got the right people and there was money for advertising and Oh, no! Who said, "Hope Springs Eternal?" The MEGA STE isn't even in production.

The "Child" Loses Its Crown

As most of you know after the combined IBM/Sears advertising barrage (that causes stomach cramps in ad-starved Atari fans), *Prodigy*, is the software program that puts your IBM PS/1 on line. All you have to do is go to your local store and get a small "white box," read modem, take it home, connect it and "the world of travel, electronic purchasing, electric mail to your friends who use *Prodigy*, and educational games, even access to a modern encyclopedia awaits you." Now, while ST users with modems have been getting all that and more from GEnie, Compuserve, UseNet, Internet and what have you, IBM/Sears touts their product as a can't-be-without new world for the owners of the latest IBM home computer. Furthermore, after you buy your modem the cost of being a "*Prodigy*" is only \$12.95 a month. The IBM BBS gang piled aboard. And then.... And then, like cable network companies, the *Prodigy* people decided to up the price, and also charge you for each piece of electric mail you sent. The war was on. Users struck back with a barrage of notices, posted on *Prodigy*, and also electronically mailed to whom-ever they could. The major weapon was to propose a boycott, a boycott of all advertisers using *Prodigy*, until the price increase was removed. Finally, *Prodigy* got nasty. They swiftly cut off usage for anybody protesting the price increase or advocating the boycott. Screams of "censorship" vibrated up and down the electronic highways. The battle still rages, but the circle of radiant light over the head of the newborn *Prodigy* has disappeared.

An Honorable Farewell?

In a gracious and responsible manner, Neocept announces "an intermission" and possibly a final curtain call for *Word Up*, which just appeared in updated 3.0 form. A call to their number receives a recorded announcement, which outlines in detail how you may get your upgrades. It points out that to stay in business and keep "improving" *Word Up*, the company will not be able to mail out upgrades etc. They note that this cut back in services will be necessary until Atari changes its approach to selling computers in the U.S., adding that if Atari doesn't, Neocept will go out of business. They explain that upgrades for *WORD UP* users with modems are available on GEnie. If you do not have the version labeled 8/20/90 then you should download it. For people without a modem, they direct you to the E. Arthur Brown Co., 3404 Pawnee, Alexandria, Minnesota 56308. They have made arrangements with the company to provide you with the upgrade for a cost of \$8. They urge you not to call E. Arthur Brown, because the arrangement provides for mail only service. *Word Up* was reviewed in CN, September 1990 and given high marks, indeed, by Christopher Anderson, a professional writer for *Nature Magazine*. So the sadness and the attrition continues. Neocept is to be congratulated on the professional manner in which they are handling their difficulties.

HP Laser Jet 3

Those of you who read the reports in the September issue of CN on the Hewlett Packard Laser Jet3, will recall the unsolved riddle of why some later vintage printers would not function on the ST, while the earlier versions presented no problem; HP maintained the parts were identical in all of the printers, regardless of which production run they came off of. The solution appears to be a "line booster" in the connecting cable. Why some com-

puters need this and others don't still remains something of a mystery. (See Letters to the Editor.) The cable, a parallel data enhancer or "data booster" is available for \$39 from Dalco at (800)445-5342.

Faster, Ever Faster

The father of the computer microprocessor had spent 20 years fighting for a patent on his invention. Last summer Gilbert Hyatt was granted the patent, which should bring him several million dollars a year, if not more, from companies that manufacture his invention. The story, however, continues for all of us. In mid-November Hyatt announced that he recently received a new patent, one for the technology that he has invented which triples the speed of our random access memory computer chips, our DRAM's. How soon the chips will begin flowing is uncertain, but Hyatt maintains that he used existing DRAM chips to implement his technology and it changes none of the other characteristics of the chips. Does that mean that a computer that runs at a clock speed of 32 megahertz, could now with obvious modification hit 100? We'll see.

Games for Your Xmas Stocking

Lynx owners or hopeful Lynx owners can look forward to the release of several new games for the best hand held game machine available. *Fly World*, *Klax*, *Zenophobe*, *3-D barrage*, and *Paper Boy* are already out, supplementing the initial four game release, and more, circa 4, can be expected prior to Christmas.

In the ST game world, Christmas top sellers are likely to be *Power Monger* (*Populous II*), *Captive* (*like Dungeon Master*), *Supremacy* (role playing), *Advance Tactical Fighter 2*, *M1 Abrams Tank Battalion*, *Team Yankee*, *Corporation*, *Chuck Yeager Flight Simulator 2.0*, *Super Off Road Racing*, *Golden Axe*, and *Their Finest Hour - Battle For Britain*.

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The Twilight Market: Mailorder Sources for 8-bit Stuff

For Atarians of 8-bit persuasion, 1990 has been a watershed year. Our two oldest and best national magazines have gone over the edge: ANALOG is gone for good, and ANTIC leads a shadow existence in STart. Bob Brodie's comments to me at the WAACE AtariFest notwithstanding, anyone with half an ounce of brains can see Atari has cast us aside like yesterday's newspaper. It is scant comfort to say we are no worse off than Commodore or Apple owners who have likewise been relegated to the back row. Only Radio Shack, with its reputation for flailing long-dead corpses, continues to manufacture and sell 8-bit technology. It is significant that 1990 marks the first year in 8-bit history in which there has been no release of new Atari 8-bit software by a major commercial software producer.

The home computer craze is now in roughly its twelfth year, but it appears only a small fraction of those millions of 800's, XL's, and XE's have found their way to landfills. Most of them are still around the house somewhere, and a new generation is discovering them. Dad gets an ST, and the old 8-bit gets donated to the (choose one): wife, kids, mother, father, brother, sister, grandparents. These people often have more time to play with the old machine than Dad did, but are usually frustrated by the lack of sources for software and accessories. Unless you're fortunate

enough to live close to an Atari 8-bit dealer (and their number is steadily decreasing), walk-in retail outlets don't exist anymore. In my own local area, this Alchemist has sadly noted at least five major distributors who quietly dropped their entire Atari computer line during the past three years. Except for video-games (ugh!).

Origins of Twilight

However the 8-bit market isn't completely dead. As 8-bit technology has slipped from the spotlight to the twilight, so has the market that serves it. Conditioned as we are to do our shopping in plastic-veneered malls that dazzle our senses with mind-numbing "ambiance," we get used to seeing the "hot" product of today's fad vanish to nothingness by next week. When a product disappears from the shelves, people just assume it isn't available any more and resign themselves to despair. These folks would buy 8-bit products if they could find them. But they have no concept of a twilight market, where the products they seek are available sight unseen. They don't know where to look. They don't know how to buy. It's hard to see in the twilight.

Eight-bit computers inhabited the retail market for such a long time that the sheer numbers of them forced the creation of a secondary market to help satisfy the demands of their owners. The

secondary market consisted mainly of high-volume mail order distributors, most of whom also quit the scene when the retail market faded. However, a few mail order firms were more than just profit-gouging warehouses: some were also into product development or hardware maintenance. From the ranks of these few has risen the twilight market that now exists. Even for these firms, sales of 16-bit products contribute heavily to their balance sheets. Eight-bit products appear to be sold more from a sense of loyalty or commitment to the market place rather than a lust for wealth. It's a unique sentiment in this era of mass merchandising.

Twilight Software

A roughly parallel development has occurred in the software market. Although we are still served by a few dedicated specialty software producers (such as Orion, Alpha, and MicroMiser), the big software publishing houses have abandoned us. Distributors of shareware and public domain software have moved in to fill the gap. My gut feeling is that the demand for 8-bit software is probably greater than the specialty producers and PD distributors together can fill. It isn't a problem of quantity, but rather quality: there just aren't enough serious application programs. Even so, PD is a gold mine for someone hungry for 8-bit software. All of it is dirt cheap. Some of it is junk. But

there are enough gems to more than compensate for the rotten eggs. Yet, many people don't even know where to obtain this kind of software.

Over the past year the Alchemist has been compiling a collection of sources for 8-bit public domain software and shareware, even placing orders with some. The Alchemist now offers a brief tour of the twilight market. Let's start with software.

Foraging in the Public Domain

There are so many PD software distributors it's hard to know where to start. I'll begin "close to home," then fan out alphabetically.

Right here in the pages of *Current Notes* is a good place to begin exploring the world of 8-bit PD/shareware. *CN* periodically publishes a list of titles available from the **NOVATARI XL/XE PD Library**. Disks are \$3 each plus \$1 shipping per 3 disks. Write Geoff DiMego, 8612 Thames Street, Springfield, VA 22151 for a catalog list and ordering info. The NOVATARI collection is typical of many of the better Atari 8-bit user group libraries, and their disk prices are on par with what other outfits charge.

The Alchemist has developed a certain philosophy on PD software purchases. At a typical price of \$3 for a disk, you can afford a significant percentage of "duds." If 50% of what I buy turns out to be disappointing or useless, the other 50% of useful programs is still a fabulous bargain. Had it not been for the existence of certain PD programs that simply aren't available elsewhere, I would probably have abandoned my XL's some time ago. Most PD distributors aren't intimately familiar with the stuff they're selling, and for \$3 I think it is unfair of a buyer to demand a guarantee that the software will satisfy his particular requirements. The only absolute requirement I make of the seller is that the software should load and run. My

experience so far has been that most PD distributors will readily replace defective disks if you experience a problem. On with the tour!

ANTIC Publishing. For many years a leading publisher of Atari 8-bit software, **ANTIC** continues to spew forth 8-bit software into the twilight market from the back pages of **STart** magazine. **ANTIC** programs typically cost \$20, but they've gained some attention in the past year with their "Grab Bag" of any ten programs for \$49.95. Regrettably, the list of titles has shrunk over the past couple years, but you can still choose from a collection of 50 programs, some of them truly excellent. Contact **ANTIC Publishing** at 544 Second Street, San Francisco CA 94107. They accept credit card orders toll-free at 1-800-234-7001.

Bacmun Software. I don't know anything about these guys. They offer a free catalog. 1671 E. Sixteenth St., Suite 607, Brooklyn NY 11229.

BRE Software. This is another outfit unfamiliar to the Alchemist, but definitely worth investigating. The only "true" PD source I've seen that features a toll free order number, 800-347-6760. Send for their free catalog at 352 W. Bedford Suite 104, Fresno CA 93711. The only PD source that accepts credit cards, they also offer the Lynx and Lynx game software. PD disks are \$3 each with freebies for quantity orders.

C&T ComputerActive. Run by Rusty Cryer at P.O. Box 893, Clinton OK 73601, he accepts COD phone orders at 405-323-5890 from 10AM-2PM CST. One of the best 8-bit PD sources around. The catalog is excellent, there are free disk coupons, and quantity specials on bulk purchases that reduce per/disk prices to \$1.50 (!). Once you get on C&T's customer list you receive periodic flyers announcing disk specials, new additions, and a new catalog several times a year. A major software resource, thousands

of files, I would estimate 500+ disks available. If you own an Atari 8-bit and don't have C&T's catalog, you are missing the boat.

Chameleon Software. 1013 Marvern Drive East, Chambersburg PA 17201. Phone 412-824-9016 or 717-267-0904. This is another outfit the Alchemist doesn't know much about. They offer a free catalog of PD software at \$2.50 per disk and apparently also deal in new and used 8-bit hardware and software. It's definitely worth a look.

KaKe Software. Operated by Kevin Laufer at 9 Smith Ct., Vincennes NJ 08088. They offer a free list of 74 disks of videogames at \$4.00/disk with discounts and free disk offers for bulk purchases.

M.W.P.D.S. Run by M. Wallace at 890 N. Huntington St., Medina OH 44256. This is a good source of 8-bit PD/shareware, similar to C&T but not quite as comprehensive a selection. Their catalog is a good complement to C&T since MWPDS has a better selection in certain categories (such as telecom software) than C&T. Super-low prices: \$1.75/disk with a minimum 5-disk purchase, discounts for volume purchases, and freebie specials. They have occasional offerings of offbeat accessory items such as the "BOOTEASE" cartridge. They accept no COD's or credit cards, and personal checks take time to clear. Their marketing is less aggressive than C&T, but the free catalog is worth reading.

Phantom's Atari 8-Bit P.D.S. Box 331 Levisa Rd., MouthCard KY 41548. Another obscure source, gleaned from a tiny ad buried in the pages of **ANTIC**. Send \$3 for catalog and variety disk.

Software Infinity. 642 East Waring Ave., State College PA 16801. These folks bill themselves as the "Best and Largest Atari 8-Bit PD Specialist" with over 6500 available programs, but their catalog is something of a disappointment. Printed in writing so small a Lilliputian couldn't read it, the listings I received were also poorly organ-

ized. Prices are \$4.00/disk with seasonal discount offers. It's probably a good source for PD, but these guys could use some marketing lessons.

Vulcan Software. Proprietor Paul Todd has an unusual way of distributing his free catalog: it is on disk. I loaded the freebie disk into AtariWriter-80, removed extra carriage returns, and printed out about half the catalog in double-column on an old 1025. This came to about 40 single-sided pages. I would estimate the Vulcan listing to be at least as comprehensive as C&T, maybe larger. I didn't even print out the largest category of software-games, which probably would add another 10 pages (!). The quantity of material available is just awesome. Disks are \$3 for single-sided, \$4 for double-sided, with free shipping on orders over \$20. Another excellent source of PD/shareware, this one has a strong personal endorsement from the Alchemist. Request the Vulcan catalog in writing to P.O. Box 692, Manassas VA 22111-0692.

Walt Huber. Last, but certainly not least, is the Walt Huber 8-bit software collection available from 644 E. Clinton, Atwater, CA 95301. You might pick and choose among the above PD distributors, but the Huber catalog is a "must have." What makes this software source different is that most of the 500+ available disks consist of discontinued brand-name software. This is a valuable resource for users who find themselves in the awful predicament of trying to replace a lost or damaged program disk from a software publisher long vanished from the market. Prices vary from \$2 to \$9 per disk according to the individual program, with a minimum \$25 purchase; freebie bonus software disks are offered for bulk orders.

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive, but it should be a real eye-opener for the doomsayers who decry the lack of 8-bit software (those guys just don't know

where to look). If I have overlooked your favorite secret source of 8-bit PD, why not send me their address or a copy of their catalog? The Alchemist would dearly love to expand the list and will use this space to pass along word of new sources. In the past year there have been some new entries into the shareware market that are most impressive, at prices so low you have to be an idiot to be an 8-bit software pirate (which they all are, anyway). As the big glitzy software houses leave us behind, the Alchemist sees a growing future for shareware and the specialty producers. Within the 8-bit software community there seems to exist a spirit of persistence and commitment which flies in the face of Atari's neglectful policy toward the 8-bit customer base that supported the company in its lean years.

Twilight Hardware

All the software sources in the world won't do you any good if you can't get those accessory doodads we all secretly crave, or if your aging 8-bit suddenly poops out and lies useless for lack of a replacement part. In this respect the twilight market continues to function much the same as it always did (though perhaps with fewer distributors and lower sales volume). The mass merchandising retail outlets in my area never were good sources for hardware parts and accessories, and I began mail ordering those items years ago. It is our good fortune that most of the same companies who competed a few years ago in the cutthroat mail order market now completely dominate the twilight market. I'll run down the list alphabetically.

Alpha Systems. Long known as a specialty developer of novel 8-bit products, they actively promote their own 8-bit line in familiar ads featuring "Yoda" (from "Star Wars") to demonstrate their "MAGNIPRINT II+" graphics package. Their 8-bit inventory is built around 15-20 items all produced either in-house

or from contract suppliers. You will often see selected Alpha products sold by other distributors, but their full line is available by direct order. Send for their free catalog at 1012 Skyland Drive, Macedonia OH 44056, or use your credit card for phone orders at 216-374-7469. Alpha's products are generally a good value, but their business acumen is a bit laid-back. If you experience a shipping delay or lost order, be patient and give them a call; they'll come through for you.

American TechnaVision. This company has been a stalwart supporter of the 8-bit market for many years, and, in my opinion, is the classiest. Their stock consists of commercially produced software, books, and new and replacement hardware and accessory items. Their sales office address is 2098 Pike Ave., San Leandro CA 94577 with mail orders to 15338 Inverness St., San Leandro Ca 94579. You can place orders toll-free at 800-551-9995, or call 414-352-3787 for information. These guys advertise aggressively and send out free catalogs several times a year. ATV accepts credit cards, and dealing with these folks is a pleasure: they are knowledgeable, competent, courteous, and professional. First-rate all the way, a showcase example of a mailorder business, a shining beacon in the 8-bit twilight.

B&C ComputerVisions. Another old-line outfit, B&C is the closest there is to an Atari 8-bit mini-mall. The single largest inventory of 8-bit products anywhere: hardware, accessories, manuals, commercial software, parts, PD software, oddball items, and things the cat dragged in. The latest issue of their free 26-page catalog arrived while this article was in preparation: their inventory already lists the new Newell 1-meg RAM upgrade announced by the Alchemist in September. Like ATV, B&C advertises aggressively, accepts credit cards, and maintains a toll-free order line, 800-969-8810 (for information call 408-749-1003).

Atari distributed the following news releases at COMDEX in Las Vegas, NV (November 12, 1990).

Atari Announces 1040STE Home Computer for the Entire Family

Responding to the demands of the growing home computer market, Atari Computer has introduced the 1040STE, an enhanced configuration of the company's popular 1040ST computer.

In making the announcement, Sam Tramiel, Atari Corporation CEO, said that the new system, which is compatible with thousands of existing ST software packages, was designed to provide the serious home computer user and small business professional with the powerful tools necessary for organizing records, writing reports, budgeting, preparing tax information, formulating spreadsheets, doing school work, handling business projects and thousands of other computing tasks.

New features on the 1040STE also make it the "dream machine" for the creative computer user. An extended color palette, hardware scrolling and digital stereo sound turn the 1040STE into a state-of-the-art audio/video entertainment experience.

The 1040STE, which has 1 MB of on-board RAM, utilizes a Motorola 68000 microprocessor and operates at a full 8 MHz. Users can display up to 16 colors from an expanded palette of 4,096 colors at resolutions of 320 x 200 or 640 x 200 with a color monitor and 640 x 400 with a monochrome monitor.

The latest TOS operating system resides in the 1040STE's ROM for enhanced disk access support, improved memory management and improved user interfacing. And an improved graphics interface provides even new users with easy-to-understand icons.

While a 3.5-inch 720K floppy is standard on the 1040STE, users have the option of adding a second

floppy and a hard drive. For custom applications and capabilities, the system includes a MIDI port, as well as the other standard ST I/O ports for a parallel printer, modem, hard disk and mouse. In addition, standard stereo output jacks and enhanced game controller ports are included. The system's 94-key keyboard, including 10 function keys, also comes standard.

The 1040STE retails for less than \$700 and is available through authorized Atari dealers.

Atari Unveils MEGA STE Business Computer Family

The MEGA STE, a high-performance computer with expandable memory specifically designed to meet the needs of the business community, has been introduced by Atari. The MEGA STE is equipped to handle information processing, data management, professional desktop publishing and other applications vital to the success of today's economy-minded business professional.

The all new MEGA STE computer continues Atari's tradition of providing outstanding price/performance. Based on the powerful Motorola 68000 microprocessor running at 16MHz, the MEGA STE provides the performance and capabilities today's businesses need. The system comes with 2 MB of RAM, expandable to 4 MB, and includes a 16K memory cache. The 256K ROM supports the operating system and graphical user interface for automatic set-up.

The MEGA STE is equipped with the latest version of TOS, providing users with an exceptionally easy operating system. The graphics interface implements easy-to-use icons and window displays for point-and-click selections. Featuring a built-in 3.5-inch 720K floppy disk drive, users have the option of adding another floppy drive as well as a 20-MB, 40-MB or larger-capacity 3.5-inch hard drive.



More than a thousand software programs are available for the new Atari 1040STE home computer. Business, word processing, music, graphics and game playing programs are available to meet the needs of the entire family.

The performance of the MEGA STE makes it the ideal solution for desktop publishing and graphics. A VME slot is provided for expansion cards, such as Ethernet; and two high-speed ports make it compatible with LAN environments. And, of course, the price makes it the system of choice for any business concerned with bottomline costs.

Special attention was given to the graphics and sound capabilities of the MEGA STE system. The expanded palette of 4,096 colors plus the choice of a high-resolution color or monochrome monitor provides users with higher-quality graphics displays than ever before.

Music professionals look to Atari for state-of-the-art MIDI features. The MEGA STE also comes standard with three programmable sound channels; programmable volume; dynamic envelope shaping; wave shaping; programmable attack, decay, sustain, release; a range of 30 to more than 20,000 Hz; and digital stereo sound.

The Atari MEGA STE system with 2 MB of RAM and a 640 x 400 monochrome monitor retails for \$1,799.95 and is available through authorized Atari dealers.

Atari Introduces TT

32-bit Graphics Workstation

As part of its focused effort to be the small systems and workstation manufacturer of choice for graphics users, Atari has designed the new TT, which utilizes the speed and power of the Motorola 68030 microprocessor, running at 32 MHz. The system also utilizes a built-in cache memory, and a 68882 enhanced floating point coprocessor for maximum performance.

According to Sam Tramiel, the speed and compatibility of the TT will be the keys to the system's success. "Unlike most cutting-edge systems, users don't have to wait for application software to be developed in order to utilize the speed and power of the TT—it's compatible with thousands of exist-

ing ST packages. A number of leading design applications programs have also been enhanced to take advantage of the new system's capabilities," Tramiel said.

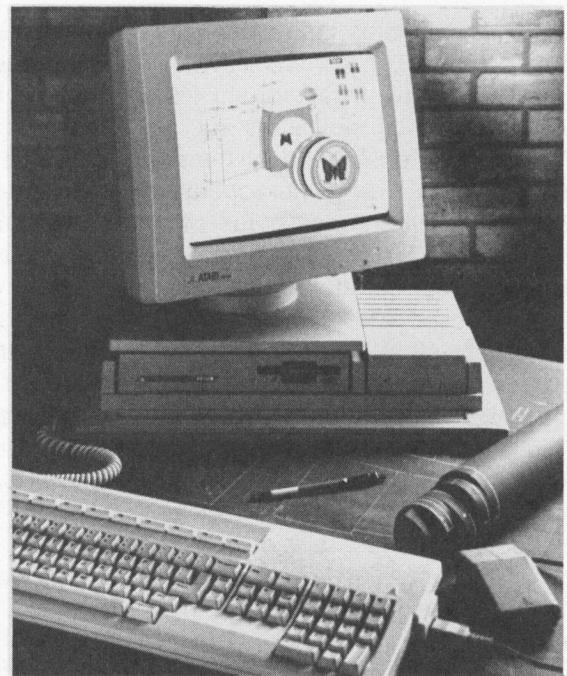
The TT was designed with an open architecture to accommodate user's changing needs. With the appropriate software, the TT's network-ready hardware can be linked into the leading network application packages. The system's standard 2-MB RAM (expandable to 26), 3.5-inch floppy drive, four serial ports, internal A24/D16 VME card slot and optional hard disk provide maximum configuration flexibility. The TT also includes a real-time clock with non-volatile RAM.

Advanced Graphics Mode.

While the processing power of the TT make it the ideal small-system solution for a broad range of applications, it was designed with the heavy graphics and design user in mind. With built-in, flicker-free video graphics that surpass VGA quality, the TT030 is the system of choice for a number of graphics applications. It's also the most flexible graphics system on the market, has multiple display modes, and can accommodate RGB, VGA and monochrome monitors.

The TT030 is equipped with three new graphics modes: 320 x 480 with 256 colors or 640 x 480 with 16 colors—both from a palette of 4,096 colors, and a high-resolution mono 1280 x 960 mode.

Along with other options, users now have two new monitors to choose from. The TTM195 19-inch high-resolution mono monitor and the PTC1426 14-inch RGB monitor both come with easy-to-view screen and a swivel base.



The new Atari TT030 is a fast, powerful and extremely versatile personal workstation for graphics and processor-intensive applications. The system is priced below \$3,000.

Industry Compatibility.

The TT was developed to support existing and future hardware and software standards, in both the graphics and personal computer industries. "The TT includes a built-in SCSI interface with DMA capabilities; as well as MIDI, parallel and RS-232C serial ports, so users can easily upgrade their systems," said Tramiel. "And, we will continue to support the Atari TOS operating system. Future operating system offerings for the TT will include UNIX and X Windows, ensuring that TT users have maximum configuration options," he emphasized.

For users who want to integrate graphics with spectacular sound effects for multimedia or animation applications, the TT includes digital stereo sound with programmable sample rates to 50 KHz.

With the appropriate software, the TT030's network-ready hardware allows users to tap into a LocalTalk network—significantly expanding the system's potential applications. The TT030 is an economical alternative to adding MAC, IBM and other expensive workstations to an existing network. In addition, the TT030 offers more

advanced features than many of its competitors.

Third-party developers are already offering emulators for the TT030 which enable the systems to run software from other operating system environments. In other words, the TT030 is the most flexible personal computer available. It can be used with TOS, DOS and even Macintosh applications software.

Open Architecture. The TT030's architecture includes the industry standard VME bus to facilitate expansion, and the system supports the latest revision (C.1) of the VME bus specification. The TT030 is designed to function in an environment with other TTs and systems from different manufacturers. To facilitate connectivity, the TT030 has an on-board port for a moderate-speed LAN. If the LAN isn't being used, the port can be programmed to be a standard RS-232C port. The TT030 also has three additional standard RS-232C ports for connecting modems, display terminals, or digitizing tablets.

In addition to the four serial ports, the TT030 has a SCSI port with DMA, a parallel port, a MIDI I/O port, keyboard, mouse and joystick ports, as well as a stereo audio output jack. The TT retails for under \$3,000 and is available through authorized Atari dealers.

Atari Introduces Enhanced Graphics User Interface

Atari Computer has announced the development of an enhanced graphics user interface ... a new Desktop. The new interface, which is included with the company's new MEGA STE and TT030 systems, features multiple icon types, a file search capability and increased application flexibility. Users will find they can manipulate their files more quickly and easily than ever before.

With the new Desktop, Atari users can now have files and folders on the Desktop screen. They can also choose how they will open

windows and have a file mask to select the files shown in windows. Greater flexibility in running programs and a range of keyboard shortcuts are other features of the new graphics interface.

The new Desktop's enhancements also include more file view options and a Help function to assist users in getting the most from their Atari computer.

To take the mystery out of computers, users can choose from a number of icon types so that disk drives, a desktop printer, the trash can and different file types can be quickly and easily identified. Programs can be run by clicking the system's mouse and opening the icon that represents the program, by pressing a system function key, or by using the mouse to "drag" a file to the program icon.

To find the specific file a person has been working with, the new graphics interface now provides more than one pathway to locate the file. By selecting a collection of file icons (or folders), the user can instruct the Desktop interface to find all occurrences of a file name.

To streamline the selection of operations, all menu items can now be selected by pressing the appropriate key. All of the menu keyboard shortcuts can be defined by the user and the key assignment is shown at the right of the menu item, so the user can see at a glance which menu he or she has selected.

In addition to using the system's mouse, window operations can also be carried out with the keyboard. For example, users can select the appropriate key to open a window and to scroll forward or backward through the windows.

To see file manipulation, Atari has also incorporated a Set File Mask capability. When used in conjunction with the Select All option, users can copy or modify the files they want displayed in the current active window, without going through a series of selection and display steps.

Atari has also added a number of file view options to Desktop for the new STE systems. For example, the Size to Fit Menu allows you to tell the system to only display as many items across a given window as will fit. This eliminates the need to scroll the screen sideways when you display items as icons (or as text when users are displaying text in the TT030's high-resolution mode).

With the No Sort option, the user can see a directory exactly as a program sees the directory. This feature was added to assist advanced users who want to increase their control over system performance, since they can more easily optimize the directory for the system to more efficiently access more commonly used files.

Realizing that even the most seasoned computer user occasionally encounters a situation where he or she needs assistance, Atari included a Desktop Help function. By pressing the Help Key, users can view all of the system's features so they can use the keyboard shortcuts. Keys have been assigned to carry out any of the tasks that were previously only controlled by the mouse.

Since everyone has a specific way he or she would like to work with window displays, users can program the "look and feel" of the displays to suit their individual preference. Third-party software developers, who have used the new Desktop graphics interface, say that novices and casual computer users will find the company's new computers even easier to use. In addition, sophisticated users will have even greater control over their system.

For more information on the new 1040STE, MEGA STE, TT030 and Desktop graphics interface, contact Greg Pratt, General Manager, Atari Computer, 1196 Borregas Ave, Sunnyvale, CA 94088; (408) 745-2000, FAX (408) 745-2088.

Comdex Impressions

by Terry May

ZNET SPECIAL REPORT

Obviously, excitement abounds at all the great new hardware Atari showed. The TT is relatively 'old news,' since it was shown at last year's Comdex. The 32 Mhz and new desktop are important new additions, however. It would've been nice to get a 1.4 meg drive and a new case, but hey, that's the breaks. I think the TT we saw is likely to be awfully close to the TT we'll someday be able to buy.

The Mega STe was probably the hit of the show, since it was somewhat of a surprise, and it's definitely something a great many users have been screaming for. I'm sure many people will be disappointed that it comes in the TT "wedding cake box," but I don't blame Atari for doing that. As long as they're going to stick with that case for the TT, they may as well keep their manufacturing costs down by using the same case for the Mega STe. Also, it's expected this will speed up FCC approval.

Atari was smart to give the Mega STe 16 Mhz speed and the new TT desktop. It also comes with a new control panel that people are going to love. One of the neat things about the control panel is controls for the stereo base, treble and balance! The Mega STe is obviously not just a simple 1040STe with a separate keyboard (albeit still mushy--why can't Atari make a keyboard with a tactile response?). It has its own identity.

Everyone's been raving about the new stereo monitor, and for good reason. It has a larger screen without sacrificing quality. The only thing that puzzles me is the new "green mode" switch. I was unable to find anyone who knew of any use for that. I could see if it allowed you to run monochrome software, or if it improved medium rez text, but it does neither. If it costs \$10 to build that in, it's \$10 wasted, in my opinion. Still, all in all, the new monitor is an excellent replacement for the SC1224.

The new laser printer is also very exciting. A much smaller size, with only slightly slower output (though many swear it's *faster* than the SLM804--at least on the first page), and perhaps most important--it's more affordable. This could be a big seller.

Atari seems to be pushing the Portfolio more than anything, and the public seemed to be responding, as the many on display were being kept very busy. They even had one hooked up to a Mac and had one of the RAM card drives hooked up to an IBM. I also personally saw several people inquire how and where they could purchase one.

Atari's display was very spacious, although a lot of it was unused. Of course, that unused space allowed room to breathe that wasn't available at past shows. It was very well laid out and very professional looking.

If Comdex is about showing off, Atari certainly did that. It's also always a time for optimism, and it's apparent they have inspired quite a bit of optimism, at least as far as many Atarians are concerned.

I wish I could share that optimism, but I guess Atari has made me a skeptic. As always, I see a lot of great new hardware, but at the same time (and at the same show), I hear grumblings that dealers cannot get hardware for the Christmas season and developers are moving on to other platforms. I also see that the "promise" of the release of the TT at Comdex was broken.

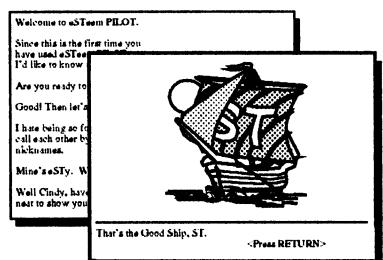
Two words keep popping in my head when I think of Atari: "Vaporware" and "Marketing." They seem to have a plenty of the former, but not a lot of the latter. To be fair, 1990 brought us the Stacy (sort of) and the 1040STe. But, of course, we're the only ones who know about them. Atari says they don't advertise because they sell all they can make. So I guess the problem is their production capacity is too low.

Enough of the commentary. I told you I'd give you my impressions that Comdex left me with, and I did. Simply put, I was very impressed with the new hardware, but just as skeptical as always. Sorry to end on a sour note, but I think with all the unbridled optimism being bandied about, it's important to keep things in perspective. Regardless of what Atari's engineering team comes up with, until they learn how to get the stuff to the dealers and advertise, the Atari market will continue to dwindle. Here's hoping that 1991 will be the year Atari shuts all of us skeptics up!

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STARTING BLOCK

by Richard Gunter

The Christmas season is fast approaching and the year is likely to end on mixed signals about the fate of our favorite computer and its manufacturer.

Dealerships are down, some of the best software developers are branching out to other platforms in order to keep bread on the table, IBM and Apple seem to have noticed the "home" user with lower-priced machines, and the clones have been chomping away steadily at Atari's price/performance advantage. Atari's new President, thought by many to offer a chance of "saving" Atari USA, seems to have had second thoughts about the whole thing and returned to France.

On the other hand, there's new product from Atari, breaking a long drought. (I'm writing this at the beginning of November; by now you'll know what Comdex has brought). Third party developers seem to be even busier than ever, what with multiple AT-class emulators and 68030 boards, and other new gadgetry. There's a steady flow (if not a torrent) of new software --both commercial and shareware/freeware.

Atari for Christmas?

I try to avoid gloomsaying as unproductive and pointless. Playing the Pollyanna isn't really my cup of mulled cider either. So, can I still recommend Atari for Christmas? Yep. The ST (or STe) is worth a look, and the TT line should offer plenty of power for the home or small business user who needs more than the ST brings. Am I nuts? I don't think so. The things I need to do can be done quite comfortably on my ST. Besides, I've been dabbling a bit at work with both an IBM and a Mac II lately, and for ease of use, Atari computers still have a decided edge.

The agonizing struggles that several friends have had in deciding which of multitudes of obscure options they need, and in getting their new IBM clones working properly makes the Atari alternative look even better. The poor slob who set up that Mac II system had no fun, either. However...

Flame On!

It hurts me that Atarians seem to be the only people who know they have a good thing; a recent conversation with a business colleague brought that home vividly. He's a programmer who tries to keep up with what's going on in the desktop computer/workstation world. He'd been telling me about the new 386 machine he'd bought, and that he was toying with the idea of springing for a laser printer or maybe a Deskjet.

Seasonal Reflections



When I told him my home machine was an Atari, he said, "I didn't know Atari made computers anymore." He shouldn't have said that. I gave him both barrels and he was impressed. "Why doesn't Atari advertise?" he said. This from a guy who reads lots of trade publications. I had no defensible answer. Sigh.

Listen Up, Atari!

Durn it, quit preaching to the choir! Selling computers to existing Atari users is no way to grow the installed user base.

Advertise the bejabbers out of the TT--someplace other than Atari publications! And throw in a sidebar about that lower cost ST option, for heaven's sake.

We Atari users are a fanatical lot, and we've been talking up and showing off our systems for years. We'll keep at it, but we need your help! It's lonely out here...

Flame off. Get another cup of coffee, Richard.

Gift Ideas

Before I got excited a few paragraphs back, I mentioned Christmas, a word that brings thoughts of holiday joy and gift shopping to mind. I dug out last year's column, which discussed a number of low-cost items for Atari users. They still stand up pretty well, so let's hit the high spots and maybe add a few.



Expendable items include printer paper, ribbons (make sure you match the brand), floppy disks (3.5" DS/DD for most Atari STs), disk marking pens or felt-tip pens. Red is excellent for editing draft text, black is good for labelling disks. Mouse pads last pretty well, but they do get a bit worn eventually, and are inexpensive.

Generic books can be found on computer-related subjects such as page design for desktop publishing and techniques for games. You won't find many books for Atari users except at some of the Atari dealers. Watch out for books that are directed at specific products; they may not be appropriate for an Atari user. Folks who use emulators might have a use for books on Mac and IBM topics, though. A subscription to *Current Notes* might be appreciated, too.

If there's been talk of **telecommunications** around the house, a new modem might be nice, or a starter subscription to one of the commercial telecom-

munications services like Genie, Delphi, or CompuServe. A little subtle research is indicated here...

Storage devices such dust covers and floppy disk storage boxes are handy, too.

The former are made to fit specific items; see your Atari dealer. Disk storage boxes come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and can be had at any computer store. I like the big wooden ones with rolltops for the desk.

Data Defender makes a plastic box that I favor for archival storage—it holds 20 3.5" floppies, is similar in shape to a VCR cartridge (but thicker), and unfolds to sit nicely on the desk when in use. Disk wallets are good for going on the road.

Cleaning up around the computer desk is always a hassle, but necessary. A disk or mouse cleaning kit and one of those tiny vacuums would be handy for cleaning keyboards and printers.

Joysticks and mice sometimes need replacement, so you might investigate this option. Try to find out what sort of joystick your Atarian favors; there are lots of choices.

There are also several choices for replacement rodents. My son seems to like the *Golden Image* unit. **Trackballs** are enjoying some popularity this year, too. A trackball is kind of an upside-down mouse with a roller ball and buttons on top. It works well on a cramped desk.

Software is always a good choice. Games, natch. Of course, you'll need to know what sort of games your Atarian prefers (arcade, flight simulators, simulations, sword & sorcery, etc.). *Current Notes* disks make excellent stocking stuffers; there's some excellent professional-quality freeware and shareware on those disks. There are lots of superior **systems utilities** available for the Atari. Alternative desktops, file selector replacements, hard drive backup/defragger programs, file management utilities, and more.

As I've said in other columns, just about anything from CodeHead Software is a good bet; their *Hotwire!* and *MaxiFile* combination is a big favorite of mine. *Neodesk* from Gribnif has a big following, and Double Click and Branch Always Software both have some good stuff at low prices. *Universal Item Selector* is superb. *Tuneup!* is an excellent defragger, and I'm seriously considering buying the *GOOD Backup Utility*; I met the author at AtariFest, and I like the way he thinks.

A Bit More Upscale

If you have a new computer system on the wish list, that could mean you're giving yourself a BIG gift this season, right?

A basic system for playing games and other light duty might be a 1MB 1040 or STE with color monitor. For more serious applications, you'll need to add a printer at least, and preferably a second floppy drive or a hard disk unit. For many applications, a monochrome monitor gives better results than color.

I recommend at least 30MB capacity for a hard drive—bigger, if you can afford it. Some people like the removable cartridge drives, but I think these are better suited as second hard drives than as the primary or only.

A good 24-pin dot matrix printer will do just fine, unless you want to get involved with DTP. In that case, you'll probably be happiest with a Deskjet or laser printer for quality. For laser printers, you'll want at least 2MB of RAM in the computer, and preferably 4MB.

Merry Christmas, all!

See you next year...



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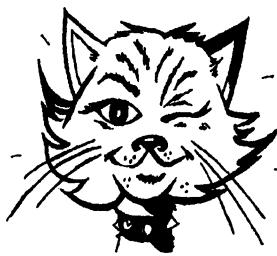
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by John Barnes

GENie Star*Services,

ST Aladdin, & GENie Lamp

General Electric Network Information Exchange, known affectionately to Atarians as GENie, has changed its look a lot in recent months. As an habitue of this vast electronic domain of spare parts, news, and other recycled reading, the Junkyard Pussycat has seen mixed reactions to this new look. A letter in which Bob Delfrancesco gives the Pussycat his reasons for dropping GENie subscribership is typical of these.

Star*Services

As reported in the October *Current Notes*, GENie has put many of its services under an umbrella called

"Star*Services." These services are provided for a fixed monthly fee of \$4.95. Since every GENie subscriber must enroll for Star*services, readers like Bob see the scheme as the equivalent of a fixed monthly dues, for which they receive nothing in return. That is not quite correct because the hourly connect fee for 2400 baud access to non-covered services was lowered to \$6.00 at the same time, so that even people who do not use any of the Star*services get some benefit.

Every American consumer is familiar with this kind of marketing. Supermarkets post low prices on "loss leaders" all of the time to entice people into the store. In GENie's case the loss leaders are the electronic mail services, some of the knowledge services, the routine account status services, and a bunch of others.

The Bulletin Boards, Roundtable Conferences, and File Libraries of particular interest to computer fans are bread and butter services, like 95 percent of the stuff in the supermarket. To ask, as some people do, that GENie give these services away for a single low price is to ask GENie to shoot itself in the foot.

The Pussycat is kind of an in-between GENie user, with monthly bills that run around \$30 or so. User group librarians who download large volumes of news and PD software have probably benefited from the new rate structure. The folks who schmooze with each other in the real time conferences probably don't notice the \$4.95 increase in their monthly rates because the more

GENie Info:

Top Banners	Info
Tips	Rates
Phones	Policy
Index	New
Contest	Press Releases
Aladdin BB	GENie Users BB

Admin:

Set	Manual
Bill	Password

Electronic Mail:

Read Mail	Send Mail
Search GE Mail	GEmailCommand
Directory	Mode

News:

US News	World News
Weather	Sports
Bowen "A Net-worker's Journal"	Computing Across America
Gutman "Computers & Technology"	

Money Matters:

Personal Loan	Closing Stock
Calculator	Quotes
Dr. Job	Real Estate BB
Charles Schwab	Home Office/Small Business BB
Investors BB	

GENie STAR*SERVICES

Product List

As of 10/1/90 (subject to change)

Education:

Groliers	Education BB
Encyclopedia	Rensselaer Poly. Inst. BBS

Entertainment/Games:

Black Dragon	Castle Quest
Original Adventure	Adventure 550
Dor Sageith	Banner Maker
Show Biz Quiz	Rainbo
Cineman	Hollywood Hotline
Soap Opera	Show Biz BB
Summaries	Music BB
TeleJoke BB	

Hobbies & Leisure BBs:

Hobby	Sports
Pets	Radio/Electronics
Aviation	MIDI/WorldMusic
Writers	Spaceport
Science Fiction	Genealogy
Scuba	Photography
Military	

Note: BB = Bulletin Board

Human Interest BBs:

Public Forum	Japan BB
Deutschland BB	Law
Medical	Jerry Pournelle
Law Enforcement	Religion & Ethics

Travel:

EAASY SABRE	Travellers Info
Destination Florida	Service BB

Shopping:

Gift Of Time	GENie Classified
GiftQuick	Alaska Genrl Store
AT&T	Autoquot-R
Computer Express	Computer Shopper
Direct Micro	Engraving Connect.
GimmeeJimmy's	Godiva Chocolatier
Cookies	Hearthside Books
21st Cen. Hobbies	Hypermail
W. Knoll Florist	Long Distance
MacUser	Roses
MaryMac	Noteworthy Music
OAG Mall	PC Computing
PC Magazine	Programs Plus
Safeware	Sears
Software Disc.	Superstore
Tall Tails	Tiffany & Co
TRW Credentials	Wall Street Journal

intelligent among them always find 1200 baud to be plenty fast for this activity and their schmoozing is already pretty expensive.

GENie's main concern is erosion of their user base. By imposing a monthly subscription fee they are able to track this base somewhat more cost-effectively. They are reducing their price on a few services as a sweetener to lure people who have not previously taken advantage of these. Time will tell whether this choice was a wise one, but GENie is at least making an effort.

ST Aladdin

For quite a while now PC users of GENie have had a sophisticated tool named *PC Aladdin* to help them find their way through the maze. Thanks to Tim Purves, a version for the Atari ST is now at hand (CN #517D). It is being heavily promoted as a way to simplify interaction with GENie's array of services.

GENie's demographic research showed that attrition rates among *Aladdin* users were lower than those for the general membership. Presumably these people found their interaction with the service more satisfying.

As the 107 page manual for *ST Aladdin* makes clear, simplifying is a pretty complicated proposition. The user sets up his choices for a GENie session off line. He then selects something like "Retrieve Mail," which causes the program to make a connection to GENie, go to the GE Mail area, and capture any mail that is on hand for the user. The program then logs off so that the user can read his messages and formulate his replies offline. The user can also browse through lists of files in the library and decide which ones should be downloaded. Some time is undoubtedly saved because the user can do his fumbling offline while going directly to the desired services once he logs on. Much of this activity can be carried out with the machine unattended, which may be attractive to heavy downloaders. There is, however, some extra cost involved because the user must periodically capture some database information that *Aladdin* needs for its operations.

ST Aladdin also contains a fairly complete scripting language that can be used to set up a connect session in advance. This may be useful for people who try to keep current on particular topics in the bulletin board areas. It should also allow unattended sessions, which might make the online services more useful for some.

The Pussycat has to admit that he has not yet printed out the entire manual and he has to get a lot of learning under his belt before the full beauty of *ST Aladdin* becomes apparent. For the time being, it is sufficient to congratulate Tim Purves and Juan Jimenez, who works with *PC Aladdin*, on jobs well done. The online services remain as one point of light in the sky for Atari fans looking for support. *ST Aladdin*

is a "must try" for anyone who makes much use of GENie.

The GENie Lamp

A bunch of the folks on GENie's ST Roundtable have been, for the past several months, taking time out to distill some of the message traffic into a light, easy to read form and making it available for downloading. Their product is called "GENie Lamp." It is presumably designed to shed some light on matters of interest to the modem mavens who frequent Atari's "official" online information base.

The 1 November issue contains quite a few useful tips for ST Aladdin users. By highlighting especially interesting tidbits from the scores of messages that are posted to the topics in the "bulletin board" area of the ST Roundtable, the GENie Lamp staff performs a real service to the Atari Community. The tone is, as might be expected, upbeat. GENie Lamp is published on the 1st and 15th of every month. The editor is John Peters. Darlah Pines and Jeff Williams serve as co-editor and technical advisor respectively.

The Pussycat's initial reaction was, "Oh, no, not another online magazine," but he now sees that GENie Lamp does provide a real service to its clients and that the general tips and news are of real value.

Kudos for the Codeheads

The Pussycat has been a somewhat reluctant user of products from Codehead Software. There is so much variety that it is hard to know which ones deserve the memory space. The Pussycat's copy of *HotWire* had been gathering dust for many months after a certain initial frustration. For the WAACE show the Pussycat decided to gather up his assortment of original discs and get the upgrades. The new version of *Hotwire* (2.3) promises to replace *NeoDesk* as the Pussycat's dominant scheme for dealing with his desktop. *Multidesk*, Codehead's desk accessory organizer, also came in for a refresh. *Popit!*, a new product that assigns hot keys to desk accessories, was an impulse buy.

For those like the Pussycat who have been out in the cold too long, it suffices to say that *Hotwire* replaces the GEM desktop with a menu in the form of a simple text screen consisting of a series of slots into which the user can place editable text or buttons to activate programs. The program activating buttons can be assigned "hotkey" equivalents that cause the program to be activated by hitting a key (or a combination of keys) on the ST keyboard. Documents can also be used to activate programs in a manner similar to the "Install Application" scheme under the GEM desktop. Hitting the hotkey assigned to a document causes the corresponding application to be loaded with the desired document in the workspace. It is a shame that

programs like Timeworks' *Publisher ST* and Logical Design Works' *LDW Power* do not support this feature, thus forcing the user to load the document after getting into the program.

The screen also has a menu bar and a small collection of icons that are used mostly for maintenance functions like changing the menu screen, saving it, or bringing up the user's desk accessory menu. One of the icons brings up a file selector dialogue so that the user can run programs that are not installed in the menus.

Charles F. Johnson and John Eidsvoog, the original Codeheads, have created a system that is simple, efficient, and powerful. It has taken a long time, but the result was well worth the wait. The simple pleasure of accessing one's applications and documents with one or two quick keystrokes has to be experienced to be appreciated. There is no longer any need for anyone but a dyed-in-the-wool mouse fanatic to go traveling all over his desktop, opening and closing windows and double-clicking on files. *Hotwire* and its auxiliary files take up something in the neighborhood of 115k bytes, so that even floppy drive users can get a good deal of benefit.

Installation is pretty straightforward because Codehead has supplied a program named "Kikstart" that sets up a simple *HotWire* environment. Unfortunately, the manual lacks an index and the authors have chosen to avoid lengthy descriptions of internal workings. As a result, the user is forced to do a lot of browsing on his own. The example files that get installed using *Kikstart* are a powerful aid in this effort. It is not too difficult to get the hang of the system by constructing analogies to the entries in the sample menus. Get help from someone in your user group if you want to make your life simpler with this powerful tool.

The Codeheads have shown remarkable perseverance and tenacity in transforming the user interface for the ST into something that is simple, rapid, and robust. At about \$100 for the whole kit, the package (*G+Plus*, *Codehead Utilities*, *Hotwire+*, *Lookit* and *Popit*) is not cheap. The investment is worthwhile because it makes the ST into a docile, yet powerful, servant. The Codeheads have, by their ingenuity, been able to provide an environment in which almost every known ST application can work the way it is supposed to. They have done this without a need for a lot of fiddling with funny little icons or worrying about screen resolutions. They deserve the kudos they have been getting from the Atari community. The Pussycat and his friends would welcome some sort of video that captures the essence of John Eidsvoog's presentation at the WAACE show.

Intelligate

For years, the Bell Atlantic telephone companies sat back and watched as modem users tied up the telephone lines to access a host of information services. The phone company finally decided to get in on the act by operating a "gateway" to a complex array of electronic information services. Some of these, like the *Official Airline Guide*, *Delphi*, or *Comp-U-Store Online*, may already be familiar to you. Others, like *Metro's Dating Service*, may not be.

The Pussycat was uninterested when he first saw the notice because he already had more connections to online services than he needed. However, a *Current Notes* correspondent from North Carolina expressed some interest in the service and the ST editor sent the Pussycat out on a prowl. The findings are not yet complete, but the gist of the scheme is as follows: for a one time registration fee of \$10 the user gets access to a telephone number that allows him to select from about 120 services. The user pays for the connection to the services at the prevailing rates, which range from \$.10 to \$1.00 per minute. Bell Atlantic handles the billing. It's really kind of like a 900 number in that you pay for the time you use. The 120 services come from 22 different providers.

For some of the services, like the *Grolier Encyclopedia*, which are available on GEnie or Compuserve, it is not clear if the rates charged under the *Intelligate* scheme are competitive with those available by other means. Likewise, it is not clear whether *Intelligate* will offer enough gateways to eliminate the long distance charges that some people now have to pay to access other gateway services like *Tymnet*, which is the most common way to connect to *Delphi*.

Providing easy access to services that deserve more attention than they are getting may be a good idea. The gamut of these ranges from business and finance, through education and reference, on to news, entertainment and leisure, shopping, and travel. Many of them, such as the *FCC Daily Digest*, are likely to appeal to a very small circle indeed. It will be interesting to see which services are worth \$1 per minute. A 900 number will at least get you some heavy breathing for that price.

Keep your eye on this space for further reports from the Pussycat.

The online industry has been in quite a struggle recently. The impact of "videotext" has not been as strong as its proponents have hoped for. There must be something there, however, if giants like Sears, IBM, and now, Bell Atlantic, want a piece of the action.

People who are interested in experimenting with this should call 1-800-543-8843 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Monday through Friday. Ignore the offer to sell you a modem. The prices are not competitive.

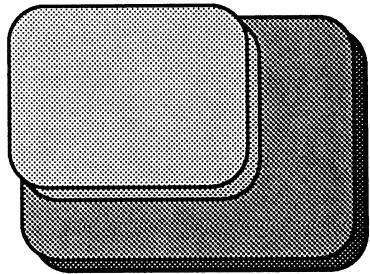
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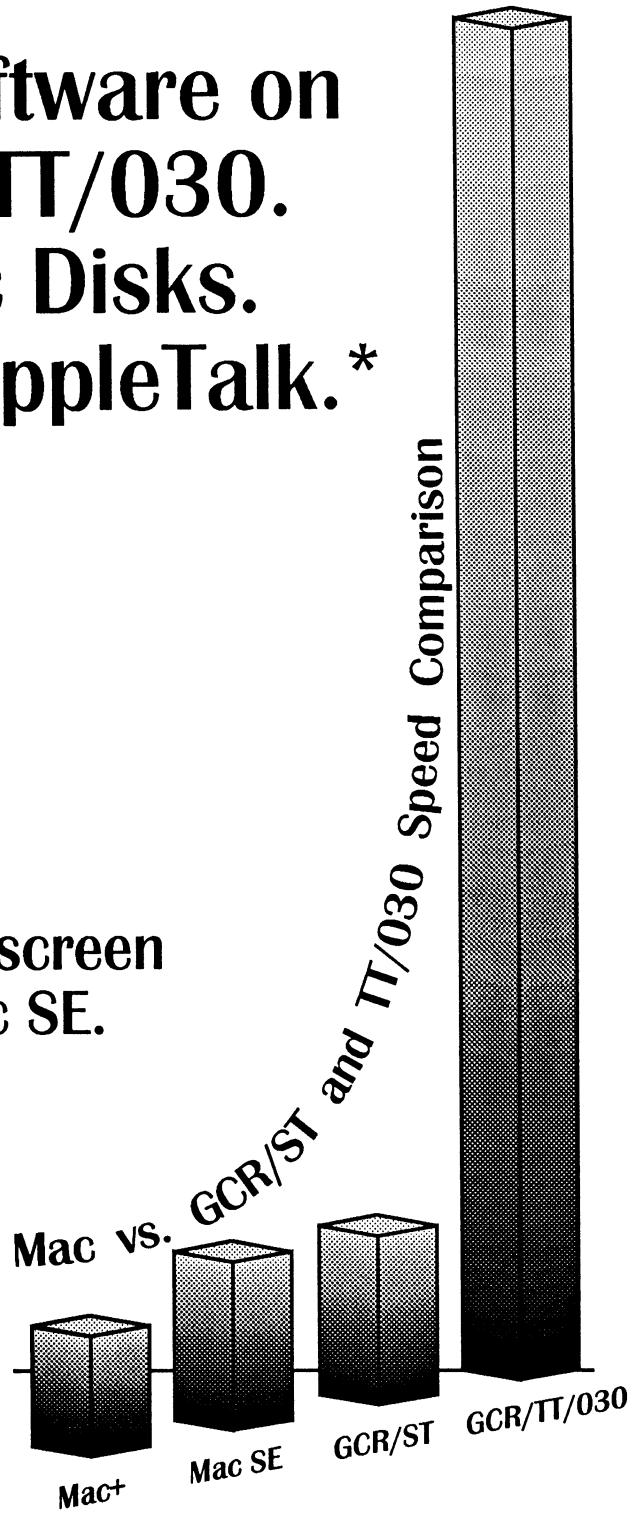
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Tax Deductions for Home Computers

by
Ben Poehland

INCOME TAX
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Whenever you write something that is published, widely distributed, and read by many different types of people, you are occasionally surprised by the little things people pick up on. Back in June 1990 *CN* printed my article "Why Five Ataris" in which (I thought) I described how I came to be the commander of a small fleet of 800XL's. (What? You didn't read that article? Well, go do it now!) On page 61 I mentioned briefly that I took a nice tax deduction for the 800XL system I use at work. At the recent WAACE Atari-Fest several people accosted me and demanded all the gruesome details on how to deduct your computer system on your taxes, like I'm some kind of tax guru or something.

Well, the last thing I'm qualified to be is a tax accountant. And I sure as heck won't be responsible for any mistakes or omissions I might make writing about this topic. On the other hand, December being the last month of the year in which to squeeze out a deduction on your 1990 taxes, it's an appropriate time to consider the subject. With only a few weeks to go before the end of the year, it's kinda hard to have a baby or buy a house—but there's still time to buy a computer. Should you do it? For most people, the answer is "Probably not." On the other hand, if you just purchased a machine that you will be using to some degree in your work or to otherwise manage your income, or if you are thinking of buying a machine for such a purpose, read on. But be warned: don't read this article halfway if you are planning to spend some money. Read it all the way through. Then read it again.

Caveats

The tax laws pertaining to deductions are a hideously complex business, and the IRS (Infernal Revenoers Sockitooyah) employs an army of overpaid bureaucrats to keep it that way. I can't possibly describe all the combinations and permutations of circumstances pertaining to computer deductions, or even all the rules that apply. What I'll do here is describe my situations, how I dealt with them, and some weird things I learned along the way. Probably 95% of people won't qualify for a computer tax deduction at all, but my experience might light the way for some of that other 5%.

This article will really only benefit folks who file the "long" form 1040 with Schedule A itemized deductions. If those two forms are the core of your Federal return, you are probably a homeowner with mortgage interest to deduct. If you are an apartment dweller filing 1040A or 1040EZ you probably won't be able to take a deduction for your home computer, and this article will be of academic interest only.

The Good Old Days

The Tax Reform Act of 1986, amended by the 1988 Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act, changed things quite a bit; and as of this writing (October 1990) Congress is exhibiting a sour attitude toward even the smallest tax loopholes. It's not bad enough the rules are so complicated, they also change according to political whims. Compared to the Good Old Days, these are rough times.

OK, there never really were any Good Old Days. Even before the 1986 Tax Law the IRS didn't make it

easy for ordinary folk to deduct home computers on their taxes. The main effect of the 1986 Act was to make it even more difficult for low-income individuals (you know, the kind of folks who buy "Power Without the Price" computers) to take the deduction.

Most of the provisions of the 1986 Act didn't take effect until 1987. Figuring out how to take the deduction was a tedious proposition, but at least I was able to write off all my business-related computer expenses on my 1986 return. In 1989, with the provisions of the 1986 and 1988 Acts in full force, I again took a business-related computer tax deduction. Qualifying for the deduction was much the same as it had been in 1986, but this time the arithmetic was appalling: I had to spend twice as much money in order to get roughly the same dollar amount deduction as I had taken in 1986. That I was able to take any deduction at all in 1989 was due primarily to the fact that I did some research ahead of time before spending money. I'll return to this later.

Qualifying

Before you can start bean counting, the very first step is to determine whether your computer purchase qualifies for the deduction. This is where weirdness begins: the Rules say one thing, but they are subject to interpretation.

I have to back up first. The IRS has an official definition of a computer. Don't worry about it. It turns out their definition is remarkably close to the thing that most of us would instantly identify as a computer system with attached peripherals. The Revenoers just wanted to make sure people wouldn't

claim calculators, copiers, or video-games as computers. The IRS also defines another category of property you can't claim: "Any equipment which is an integral part of other property which is not a computer." I'm still scratching my head on that one.

OK, back to qualifying. The first test you have to meet is, are you using the computer more than 50% of the time for your business or other income-producing activity? If your answer to this question is No, in my opinion you might as well forget trying to deduct your computer. Oh, sure, you can still qualify for the deduction if your business usage is less than 50%. But you have to pro-rate the usage based on a detailed daily log of your total usage—a recordkeeping nightmare. Even worse, you have to use a less beneficial method of depreciating the computer if you fail the 50% test. If your usage is more than 50 but less than 100%, you can use the more efficient methods of depreciation but still have to keep a stupid log book and pro-rate the usage. Things are rendered so much simpler when your business usage is 100%. I qualified because my business usage was 100%, and I have a gut feeling that "100" figure is what the Revenoer really wants to see.

Next there is the "convenience" test. The Rules say that computer usage must be for the convenience of the employer and required as a condition of employment. Strange phrase, that "convenience of employer" stuff. It seems the IRS hasn't quite defined it exactly. However, one thing I learned is that you will automatically satisfy the convenience test if the computer stays on the employer's premises and is used solely for company business. The IRS did elaborate on "condition of employment," which is tied to this "convenience of employer" business. Basically, the use of a computer must be essential to the employee's work, but the employer

doesn't need to explicitly require the employee to use a computer; similarly, a mere statement by the employer that using a computer is a condition of employment will not of itself suffice. It's a "necessity test": you have to demonstrate that computer usage is necessary for your work and also that you actually are using the computer on a regular basis.

What the Revenoer Man looks for is a direct relation between computer usage and job requirements. When the examiner saw my claim for a computer deduction, he no doubt checked my occupation ("Research Chemist") and then the name of my employer on my W-2 (pharmaceutical company) and saw a credible relationship between the nature of my work and my computer usage. If my listed occupation had been "Dishwasher" and my W-2 was issued from "Charlie's Bar and Grill," the Revenoer would have been hard pressed to figure out why I deserved a deduction for a computer. Of course, I also made things easier for The Man by attaching a statement listing the uses I made of my 800XL: scientific calculations, preparation of company memos, letters, scientific manuscripts, storage and retrieval of scientific data, communication with my employer's mainframe system, etc. This was probably overkill, but I wanted to ensure that even the sharpest Revenoer wouldn't have cause to challenge the validity of my computer usage on the job.

It is interesting to note that I qualified for the deduction even though my employer never specifically told me I had to have a computer. It happened like this: one day my boss dumped a 17-pound stack of scientific data on my desk and said, "Ben, I want you to analyze this data and summarize your analysis in a manuscript suitable for publication in a scientific journal. And do it within a reasonable timeframe—yesterday will be fine." (Boss people are so lovely.) I went nuts. The task was over-

whelming, but my boss didn't care a whit how it got done. He left it entirely up to me what means I should use, but clearly a computer was my only hope. Even after I installed the 800XL at my desk, it was two months before I had a rough draft in hand. The original draft went through 14 revisions before I submitted it to the publisher. To do something like that by hand was utterly unthinkable. But hey, by installing my 800XL at work, I had satisfied both the "convenience" and "necessity" tests.

By the way, "business usage" of a computer doesn't have to be restricted to a computer that you use in your job or profession, and you don't have to keep the machine on your employer's premises to qualify. If the computer is used in any activity that results in reportable income, you're still in the ball game. For example, a real estate agent who maintains a home office (and is entitled to all applicable home office deductions) might place a computer in the home office which is used 60% of the time for, say, property listings. But suppose this same agent also maintains a portfolio of stock investments which is managed on the same computer, and earnings from the investments result in additional taxable income. Then that other 40% of computer usage could probably qualify to bring the system up to a full 100% business use deduction. In general, self-employed people have more opportunities for deductions than the 9-to-5 crowd. After all, since they are their own employers they can best decide what is "convenient for the employer." A freelance author who uses a home computer to generate manuscripts for which he is paid taxable income would be in a good position to claim a 100% computer deduction. But an engineer who buys a portfolio to run calculations and prepare charts during his daily commute will probably be construed as having a computer for his own convenience, not his employer's—especially if

the employer has furnished the engineer a computer he uses at his desk.

Depreciation: The 179 Miracle

So, you've passed all the qualifiers--business usage, the convenience test, the necessity test. Lucky you, now you get to depreciate your machine! Depreciation is the means by which you figure the value of your deduction with respect to time. This is because the Revenoers want to ensure that you don't deduct your property in full all at once. You could end up not owing any taxes which would bankrupt the whole Guvermint. (And as we all know, the Guvermint doesn't need any help going broke; in that department it performs superbly all by itself.) So the Revenoers make you spread the deduction out over a period of years, which gives rise to various "classes" of business property. You got your 3-year property, your 10-year property, 15-year property, and so on. Computers are "5-year property," which means the computer has to be kept in service for five years for you to take the full deduction. Given the rate at which computers are rendered obsolete these days, that is probably too long. But Rules is Rules.

The bean counters have devised myriad miraculous ways to depreciate things--accelerated depreciation, alternative depreciation, adjusted straight-line depreciation, and other methods beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. You needn't worry about that stuff. What we are interested in is something called Section 179 Depreciation. Amid all the IRS restrictions that force you to spread your deductions out over time, Section 179 appears as some kind of miracle: it allows you to deduct the entire cost of your computer all at once, in the year the machine is placed in service. You buy your computer, use it for five years, and take the entire 5-year deduction in

the first year. No muss, no fuss, no forms/charts/calculations to track annually for five years. If there is anything like a bright spot in the depreciation rules, it is Section 179.

That was the good news, but there's a damper. Seems some smart aleck at the IRS realized that if everyone ran out and bought home computers and took Section 179 the Guvermint would take a big tax loss. Realizing Section 179 was a gift to the taxpayer, the Revenoers in true form began whittling away at it to make sure it was as small a gift as possible. You guessed it: more Rules. Fortunately for us common folk, the limitations on Section 179 mostly hurt the Fat Cats and merely result in added tedium for everyone else. The main hurdle is that your Section 179 deduction can't exceed \$10,000 in any year. The average person reading this article will likely never spend that much for an Atari computer in a year, so most Atarians will sneak through OK.

Now, just in case some diehard type whose computer business usage is less than 50% has followed this article along to this point in desperate hope of still claiming a deduction, I'll lay you to rest right here. If your business usage is less than 50%, you don't qualify for the coveted Section 179 deduction. IRS Rules say you MUST take adjusted straight-line depreciation over five years for business usage less than 50%. That method will likely reduce your potential computer deduction to a number so low it won't pass the income threshold limitation (otherwise known as the Two Percent Whammy) that we'll encounter later on. If you can't qualify for Section 179 depreciation, you should forget about deducting your computer.

Doing It with Forms

So, maybe you've invested \$1400 in an ST-based system you will use in your work or investment management. (You DID keep all the receipts for it, right?) Your new

system passes all the qualifying tests, you can take Section 179 depreciation, and now you're salivating at the prospect of taking the full \$1,400 deduction on your 1990 taxes. How do you do it?

With forms, of course. The Revenoers have a diabolical fixation for them. Specifically, you will need IRS Form 4562, "Depreciation and Amortization" (get several copies), and you will also need your 1040 Schedule A, "Itemized Deductions." Obtain these forms from your IRS office, and MAKE SURE you also obtain the Instructions that go with Form 4562. You would also do well to pick up copies of Publication 17 "Your Federal Income Tax," Publication 534 "Depreciation," and Publication 535 "Business Expenses." The Revenoers give you all this stuff for free. Nice guys, huh?

I'll use the 1989 form in the following example, but line numbers might be different for the 1990 version. Like most Guvermint things, you fill out the form "bass-awards." You start on the back side of the form under Part III. Line 24 will ask you some tough questions about what evidence you have to support your business use. You better check off "YES" to both questions, and be prepared to present your evidence if you are audited. Line 25 is where you get down to the nitty-gritty of things. Column A is the type of property ("computer equipment"), column B is the date it was placed in service (month/year), column C is business use percentage (100, unless you are a masochist), and column D is the cost of the equipment (say, \$1,400 for that ST-based system in our example). Then, you run your eye all the way over to column I and enter our \$1,400 figure there under "Elected section 179 cost." Finally, you again enter the \$1,400 figure on line 28.

If there are any comments or important points you wish to impress upon The Man, this is where to do it. In 1986, and again in 1989,

I made a notation in the margin to the effect that the claimed equipment was kept on my employer's premises 100% of the time and used solely for company business.

Now you come around to the front of the 4562, filling in your name, occupation, and SSN. Lines 1-5 make you do some rinky-dink calculations to compute the limitations on your Section 179 deduction. This will end up having no effect on you (unless you claim more than \$10,000), but you darn well better do it anyway. The Man wants to see that you paid attention to this, so fill in every line including lines where the amount is zero (I always use "- 0 -" for zero). Skip line 6 (unless you are deducting a truck), and fill in lines 7-12 including zeroes. Then jump down to the Section D Summary at the bottom of the page and enter the depreciation amount on line 19. Using our \$1400 example, that \$1,400 figure should appear on lines 2, 7, 8, 11 and 19. Whew!

The Two Percent Whammy

Now you need Schedule A to enter the depreciation on your computer as a deduction. On the 1989 Schedule A, you do this on line 20 under the section titled "Job Expenses and Most Other Miscellaneous Deductions." Write in "form 4562 attached" and enter the amount from line 19 on the 4562. Add in any other business deductions on line 21 (I'll assume you don't have any) and sum the two on line 22. For our \$1,400 example, line 20 is 1400, 21 is zero, and 22 is 1400.

The next line, line 23, is a killer. On this line you are instructed to multiply your adjusted gross income (from Form 1040) by .02 and enter the result. And then, on line 24, you subtract the amount on line 23 from the amount you claimed for your computer on line 22. The result of this calculation is so devastating to your deduction that I've nicknamed it "The Two Percent Whammy."

Here it is in English: suppose your adjusted gross income is \$35,000, and you are claiming that \$1,400 ST system from our example. Two percent of \$35,000 is \$700. Deduct \$700 from \$1,400. Your deduction is now only \$700. In one fell swoop your deduction has been cut in half! Cruel, isn't it? The Tax Man laugheth.

The Two Percent Whammy didn't exist when I took my first deduction in 1986, but it stung me badly in 1989. After all these tedious tests and calculations, I was furious when I discovered most of the stuff I bought to upgrade my 800XL system at work couldn't be written off. This was in December 1989, and there were still a few weeks left in the year. I got to thinking—you know, Rules is Rules. I had already purchased enough qualified equipment to satisfy the Whammy, leaving only a meager sum to deduct. It occurred to me that I could grow that meager sum into a substantial deduction by buying more equipment. After all, once The Whammy is satisfied, every additional dollar spent is deductible. It was my turn to laugh, albeit through clenched teeth.

Beating the Whammy

The urge to upgrade my 800XL was born in November 1989 when Atari finally released *AtariWriter-80*. I purchased the new software, an XEP-80 interface, a new Epson 24-pin printer, and parts and wires to make my own cables. It wasn't enough to get me a decent deduction. During the course of a typical year, I make many small cash purchases of minor upgrades, consumable items, accessories, manuals, spare parts, etc. for my machine which I never bother to deduct. In the waning weeks of December 1989, I was hungry for deductions, so I decided to lump all those future purchases together and make them before the end of the year to maximize my deduction. You can't escape The Whammy, but with some planning you can

minimize its effects. I call it "creative spending."

In going through the manual for my Epson L-1000, I noticed they didn't give printer codes for the special graphics characters. That information was available in the manual for the older LQ-500, so I purchased an LQ-500 manual for my L-1000. While I was at it, I also purchased a hardware/repair manual for the L-1000. And a dust cover. I typically go through several printer ribbon cartridges a year, so I bought a mess of those. Then a plug-in multi-font cartridge and a spare dot head. The new printer didn't fit well on my desk and required a wooden stand for support. Due to the shape of my desk the wooden stand sat crooked and required extra rubber feet to level it. By this time I was in high gear, running up a nice little tab and enjoying every minute of it.

I turned my attention to the rest of the system. With the addition of *AtariWriter-80*, it was time to add RAMBO to my 800XL. About time also to upgrade my old 1050 with U/S Doubler and SpartaDOS. I rounded things out with spike suppressors for the AC line and for the telephone line connected to my modem, and a spare mechanism for the 1050.

The Bottom Line

By the last week of December, I was out of time and pretty much out of ideas for qualified purchases, so my buying frenzy came to a screeching halt. It was just as well. I had parlayed a meager deduction into quite a healthy one, but in the short term I had incurred a credit crunch. In January 1990 the credit card bills started coming in—ugh! Try telling Master Charge you want to wait till April to pay off your Christmas charges!

The financial discomfort was only temporary. During 1990, I stretched out my payments for most of those purchases by converting the individual credit card bills to a single credit balance on

my home equity credit account. This freed up all my credit cards, allowed me to escape consumer interest charges, and greatly reduced the financial impact of my end-of-the-year spree. True, I did incur interest charges on the unpaid balance of my equity account during 1990. But equity interest rates are lower than consumer rates, so I didn't pay as much. And, of course, equity interest is mortgage interest, so I'll write it all off on my 1990 taxes anyway. I can't say it was easy, but this past April I did take a chunky deduction for computers when I filed my 1989 return.

Why bother? Well, in 1991 the 800XL that I wrote off in 1986 becomes fully depreciated. It is still perfectly good, but what happens to it then? It becomes my personal property, paid for by the U.S. Guvermint: I can do anything I want with it. And you wonder how the Fat Cats got fat? True, the XL's obsolete now, what with TT's and such coming along. But I'm into 8-bits for the long haul, so that doesn't bother me.

Grand Strategy

So, are you still contemplating a deduction for your Christmas computer? If you installed the machine earlier this year, now is a good time to think about what accessories to buy for it before the year ends. It's a good time also to start ordering tax forms.

If you haven't spent anything yet, you'd better think hard and act fast. You'd better make doubly sure you can pass the usage, convenience, and necessity tests, and that your machine will qualify for Section 179 depreciation. You should estimate what your 1990 AGI will be and figure how hard you're going to get hit by The 2% Whammy. Then you should figure how much you need to spend to get a decent deduction, and whether your short-term financial resources will permit you to spend that much money. If you still get a green light after going through all

that, it's time to visit distributors and start cutting the deals.

Remember this also: if you screw up, you can lose your shirt. If you are the sloppy type who loses receipts and hates forms, you'd better think twice. Even if you are careful and meticulous, things can still go awry. Deducting a computer is not for people who want the Easy Way, nor for the faint of heart. If the Revenoover looms in your subcon-

scious like The Nightmare Boogiem-
an from Hell, this isn't for you.
Revenoers get annoyed at people
who faint during audits. You'll have
to accept personal responsibility if
something goes foul.

But if you got your stuff down cold, enjoy the thrill of living on the edge and a good game of "Pinch the Dragon's Tail," then go for it. I did it twice and am still alive to say so. And I came out ahead.

STalker and *STeno*

an unbeatable accessory combination at an unbelievable price: **\$30 for both!**

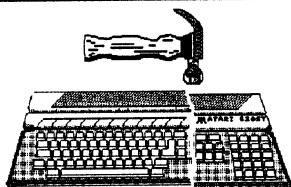
Stalker is a complete terminal emulator that does **everything** in the background. *Steno* is a text editor that uses as little as 90K of memory. Both programs utilize the GEM clipboard to exchange data, allowing you to cut and paste between them, and both programs are Moniterm compatible!

Stalker features: fast popup menu or convenient ALT-keys for command entry ♦ *background* file transfers ♦ *background* dialing of any group of numbers ♦ separate terminal/RS232/auto-logon settings for each dialer entry ♦ scroll-back buffer of up to 2000 lines ♦ 20 programmable function keys ♦ VT100 & Atari VT52 emulation ♦ can optionally be used with Shadow™ ♦ capture directly to *Steno* ♦ New "Remote Access" (BBS) mode ♦ Easy to use-ideal for new users!

"A **GREAT**, Full Featured Terminal Program" - ST Report #112

Steno features: command entry via ALT-keys or the unique menu bar *inside the accessory window* ♦ configurable word-wrap ♦ search and replace ♦ *background* printing ♦ variable tabs ♦ choice of font sizes ♦ Mac-like cut/copy/paste and text block selection using the mouse ♦ hot-key to/from *STalker* ♦ fast paragraph reformatting ♦ can be used as a type-ahead buffer for *STalker*

STalker and *STeno* are available **now** at your local dealer, or from:
Strata Software 94 Rowe Drive, Kanata Ontario Canada, K2L 3Y9, (613) 591-1922



DC Utilities Revisited

Double Click Software has released an updated (or rather upgraded) Version 2 of *DC Utilities* (see my write-up in the January '90 issue of *Current Notes*). *DC Squish* by Keith Gerdas (a good utility to start with, almost a reason by itself to buy the whole original package) has been significantly enhanced and improved (the new version carries number 1.4). As you may remember, *DC Squish* takes a program file (including desktop accessories) and makes it more compact. The program (or accessory) can still be run as normal—the only difference you will notice is the smaller file size. Both hard and floppy drive users will benefit from squishing their programs and accessories.

The new *DC Squish* really shines in terms of the compaction efficiency. While the original was usually less efficient than the public domain *Packer*, the new version is better than *Packer* (or anything else): it produced smaller files in every one of fifty or so cases I have tried it on so far. A savings of 35–40% is typical for medium-to-large programs. (Besides, *Packer* does not compress desktop accessories.) *DC Squish* is also much

Squishing and Unzipping

A Better *DC Squish*, a Better *G+Plus* and a Humble *AW Printer Setter*

faster and convenient to use. Very, very impressive.

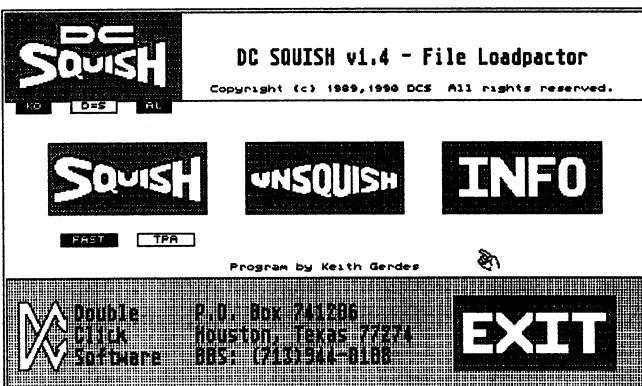
The program is also smart. It will recognize files compressed with *Packer*, and re-compress them into its own, more space-efficient standard. It will also re-squish files squished by the older versions of *DC Squish*.

The nice-looking, but somewhat confusing, self-selecting dialog buttons have been replaced with "regular" ones (maybe I was not alone in complaints about this?). A small, but welcome, difference.

button of programs compressed with use of *DC Squish*. There is nothing on the new disk to indicate that this (ridiculous, I think) limitation has been lifted. A simple requirement of referring to *DC Squish* in the documentation of squished programs would be just fine, greatly increasing the usefulness of the program on one hand, while, on the other, generating some deserved publicity for Double Click Software.

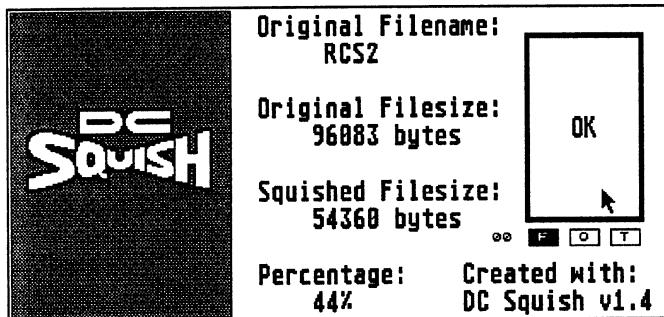
Another significant improvement in the *DC Utilities* package concerns *DC Xtract*—the file compression and decompression program written by Paul W. Lee. The new version handles all common compression standards, i.e. files with extensions .ARC, .LZH, .ZIP and .ZOO (just recently I have downloaded a ZIPped file from the Borland Forum on CompuServe and *DC Xtract* came in very handy!); it also does it with a very respectable speed and a high degree of flexibility.

The user interface in *DC Xtract* is not very intuitive at first, but you will get used to it after just ten minutes or so—not bad. On the other hand, the program has some unique and useful features, like being able to handle wildcard characters (you may compress, say, all *.DAT files from a folder with a single command), or having the ability to preserve nested directory structure. It now can be used as a PRG-type application (as opposed to a desktop accessory), and some may find it more convenient this way.



The new *DC Squish* is a well-designed and cleverly implemented piece of software. Again, for me it may justify the price of the whole package (which also contains some other nice goodies, read on!), and every ST user, advanced or not, will benefit from buying it.

I have just one reservation about the program. The original version came with a notice expressly forbidding any form of distri-



CUTT.ARC\NEODESK3							
Total Files: 38 Bytes: 682398 Selected Files: 7 Bytes: 117384							
SET_3.NIC	16720	Crunch	84%	16149	11/04/90	02:33p	A4EB
VERTICAL.NOT	1838	Crunch	99%	17	11/09/90	12:18a	8F2A
FOREST.PC3	38061	Crunch	85%	28846	10/11/90	12:06a	F8BF
OPOROW.PC3	19975	Crunch	83%	19514	11/28/85	12:06a	7E14
NEO_H3.INF	3348	Crunch	36%	2146	10/11/90	12:22a	1DB7
TRASHCAN.NPG	13355	Crunch	28%	18786	08/19/90	04:18p	BD5A
NEOPIC_M.PC2	28024	Crunch	26%	28855	11/12/90	02:26a	C5A8
SET_4.NIC	16720	Stored	00%	16720	11/04/90	03:06p	7AE2
TUNNEL.PC3	19387	Crunch	26%	14365	10/13/90	04:08p	E1DE
DESKTOP.PI3	32034	Crunch	56%	14186	10/13/90	03:54p	0A7E
NEODESKM.RSC	50696	Crunch	57%	21818	11/05/90	01:01a	BBE5
SET_5.NIC	16720	Stored	00%	16720	11/04/90	06:59p	AF38
SET_6.NIC	16720	Stored	00%	16720	11/09/90	09:37p	E065
SET_7.NIC	16720	Stored	00%	16720	11/09/90	09:43p	48BA
SET_8.NIC	16720	Stored	00%	16720	11/09/90	09:53p	05C9

their new *G+Plus* and *G+Mini* desktop accessories contain a new feature, making your life with the *Publisher ST* from Timeworks much easier when you use different font sets for various occasions.

As you may remember, these accessories allow for loading the proper .SYS file with list of fonts "on the fly": each of your programs may have its own default, which also can be overridden. In the case of *Publisher ST*, you also needed a file named PUBLISH.WID, containing the width tables for the current font set. Therefore, before running the program you had to properly rename one of the (possibly previously created) .WID files or to re-run the FONTWID program.

You no longer have to remember this. The new versions of the *G+* accessories will do it for you automatically, as long as you adhere to consistent naming conventions (the same name for the corresponding .WID and .SYS files). A small feature, but really more useful than it might seem at the first glance.

At the risk of being repetitive: if you use any GDOS-based programs (and *Publisher ST* in particular), there is just no excuse: *G+Plus* is a must.

A Bit of Self-Promotion: *AW Printer Setter*

The printer-setting utilities, proliferating in the freeware area, allow you to select various printer attributes (font type, spacing, skip over perforation etc.) by clicking on appropriate dialog buttons, and then they send the proper control codes to your printer.

The problem is that almost every printer model uses a different set of those control codes, and these are hardwired into the program. Therefore, you have one program to set an Epson LQ, another for the Okidata, and still another one for the Star series, and so on. Sometimes you would like to make use of some special features (like a font cartridge you have just

Why would anyone want to pay for *DC Xtract*, you may, ask, if we have ARC and LHARC in the public domain, together with Mr. Johnson's *Arc Shell* (good and robust) and some other free (if not so good) shells? Well, you may decide to pay for the speed and convenience. *DC Xtract* is fast, comes as just a single program file, has many convenient features and handles four formats. And, as just one of the components of the *DC Utilities* package, it is also almost free.

DC Utilities v.2 also include *DC Freeze Frame* (a screen snapshot for .PI?, .PC? and .NEO formats not requiring access to the menu bar, handy!), *DC SEA* (to produce self-extracting ARC files; most of us could easily live without this program, but some may find it useful), *DC RamIt* (a RAMdisk duplicating the structure of a real disk, ditto) and *DC Deskey*—a new (3.0) version of the desktop accessory I reviewed in January. *DC Freeze Frame* became my favorite snapshot accessory (I have been using it to get the pictures accompanying this article) in spite of the fact that images stored in the compressed Degas format (PC3 and PC2) could not be read into *Degas Elite* or *Supercharger*. For the time being, I have to be happy with uncompressed Degas files. I hope by the time you read this the problem will be fixed (Double Click

Software has a good record here).

DC Deskey allows for assigning various menu entries to keystrokes and for re-mapping the keyboard. The latter is a new and significant feature in this version, but, nevertheless, *DC Deskey* still falls somewhat short of my expectations: being able to map two- and three-stroke sequences to single keys (a common ^KB pair, for example is often used to mark the start of a block in a word processor) would make this utility really useful. As most of my editors and word processors use two-keystroke commands, I just hope that this will be found in the next version. (To be quite honest, some of the programs you want to customize may have menu equivalents for the two-keystroke commands, so you could map those into the keyboard and find *DC Deskey* a handy tool anyway.)

Do not wait, however, until the next version of *DC Utilities*—the current package may already be worth the \$40 price tag (depending on your needs and work habits). In my own case, I found the expense well justified, and I am anxiously waiting to see what these guys will come up with next.

A New, Nice Touch in *G+Plus*

I recently upgraded to the newest version of *G+Plus*, the GDOS replacement from Code-Head Software. A nice surprise:

bought), but the program you found does not allow you to.

Now, let me hope the utility I wrote a few months ago will alleviate your troubles here.

The *AW Printer Setter* does not know anything about your printer. It knows nothing about the kind of attributes you can adjust, nor how to adjust them (i.e. by sending what codes). All this knowledge is contained in a human-readable data file the program accepts and interprets.

Let us assume your printer, Lixxon PP-200 (one-of-a-kind bargain from Upper Volta) allows for setting only the font (draft or letter quality) and horizontal pitch. The former is set by codes 27, 120 and 0 (draft) or 27, 120 and 1 (letter quality), and the latter by 27 and 48 (ten characters per inch), 27 and 49 (twelve cpi) or 27, 50 and 1 (fifteen cpi). You found this information in the user's manual.

All you have to do in this simplistic example, is to set up a short data file, called *AW_PRSET.DAT*, that will look like this:

```
: Start of data file
Lixxon PP-200, Version 1A
Font:
Draft | 27 120 0
Letter Quality | 27 120 1
Pitch:
10 cpi | 27 48
12 cpi | 27 49
15 cpi | 27 50 1
: End of data file
```

This data file indicates two attributes, Font and Pitch. The first attribute, Font, has two settings (Draft and Letter Quality). The second attribute, Pitch, has three settings (10 cpi, 12 cpi, and 15 cpi). When the program is run with this file in its directory, the printer setup

dialog will look like the one shown in the accompanying picture.

The convenience of this approach seems to be obvious. As long as you have the printer manual, you decide how the printer is to be set, and you do not have to write a customized program to do that! (Not everyone is a programmer; some of my best friends are not.)

Moreover, the program also allows you to predefine some frequently used combinations of attributes. For example, you may want to have a draft/12 cpi combination for printing out programs, a letter quality/10 cpi one for correspondence, and a draft/15 cpi one to print labels. To introduce these three definitions, you just have to include (anywhere in the data file) the following three lines:

```
$ Program | 1 2
$ Correspondence | 2 1
$ Label | 1 3
```

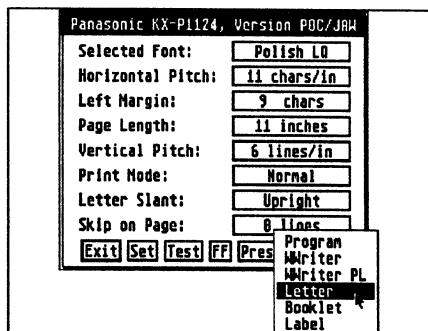
(Let me explain, for example, just the third line. "Label" combines the *first* setting of the first attribute with the *third* setting of the second attribute, hence 1 and 3.)

The dialog box is not too crowded. For each attribute, only the current setting is displayed; the other ones can be selected from a simple pop-up menu. The program also allows you to print out ASCII files without exiting to the desktop, and to test current settings by printing a six-line sample of text.

I am making *AW Print* available in the Current Notes Library this month (CN #519), and you are free to use it and give it away to your friends. The program comes in .PRG and .ACC flavors, and there are detailed (at least I hope so) instructions on the disk. I have also

included two ready-to-use data files: one for the 24-pin Panasonic KX-P1124 (see the picture) and the other for Panasonic KX-P1091i. The first

one will work OK with the Epson LQ series, while the other one--with Epson RX (and other so-called "Epson compatibles.") If anybody comes up with data files for other models (or with better data files for

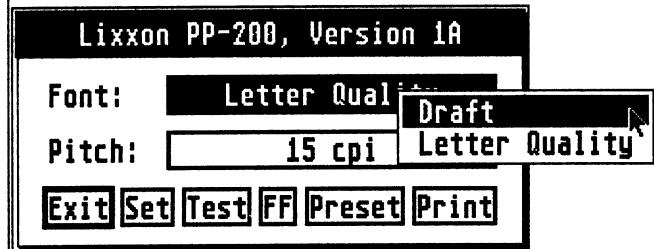


those already covered), please send them in: our Publisher will be happy to add them to the disk. [I will add files for the HP LaserJet IIP, the Diablo, and the Qume. -JW]

Unfortunately, I had to provide the separate accessory and stand-alone versions, as (shame! shame!) I was not able to figure out how the program would know the name of the file it runs from. The GEM procedure supposed to provide this information behaves erratically. I may be the last in town who knows the way around this bug, as everybody else seems to have no problems (most of the *DC Utilities* discussed above can be just renamed to .ACC or .PRG). Any Good Samaritan who tells me the secret, will be rewarded with the virgin copy of the new version. Write c/o Current Notes, or send electronic mail on GEnie (J.WROTNIAK) or CompuServe (70611,2552).

Second, the program could be much smaller (it takes now more than 40k, which for a desktop accessory is quite painful). This is because *AW Printer Setter* contains very little original code. It mostly re-uses high level libraries I have developed for other purposes (and they contain much stuff this program does not use at all).

Enough excuses. I hope you find the program useful and I welcome any enhancement suggestions. In the meantime, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,





Ten Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth

(c) 1990 David C. Troy

No News Is Good. I often like to concentrate my efforts for this column on some new product or idea that's been introduced into the Atari world. I've been busy with school and other things, and I haven't had much time to get any astounding ideas or revelations. So what do I do when that happens? I write about desktop publishing or hard drives. This time it's DTP.

I don't want to bore you with another discussion of how swell the ST is for DTP. I think we all agree on that. Nor do I want to delve into some deeply technical discussion about how to install a dead goat driver into your favorite DTP program. I have a few ideas about DTP, being in this somewhat professionally now, and I'm going to pass on some of them to you as **Dave's Top Ten (or so) DTP Hints.**

10: Know Your Printer

I get a lot of calls and letters from folks thinking that if they get a DTP package like *Timeworks DTP* or *Calamus* then they'll instantly be ready to produce the next issue of *Newsweek*. You should know that to do work of that caliber, you need a fairly hefty amount of equipment. For instance:

9 Pin	24 Pin	Atari	Lino-
Dot	Dot	< SLM	< tronix
Matrix	Matrix	Laser	300

This simple relation shows you how good your output quality would be, from worst to best, depending on what kind of printer you intend to use. The vast majority of folks have one of the first two printers, and the output from these units, while good, is not anywhere near as good as that from the last two. Shop, compare, and be familiar with all of the first three. (An L300 costs around \$40,000). I use the SLM804 and sometimes contract a service bureau to print on an L300 at \$8.00 per page.

9: Know Your Computer

For DTP, you're probably going to want more than one megabyte of memory. Two or two and a half are good, but four would be best. This allows you to create complex documents using several graphics, as well as use a lot of fonts. The Atari laser printer (SLM804) requires that you have at least two megabytes for normal operation, one of which is devoted entirely to setting up the page for the laser. *Calamus* allows you to print to the SLM804 laser using a routine where it prints your file from disk, without *Calamus* being loaded. But don't think this won't drive you nuts--it will. Make sure your computer is in a decent state of repair--you don't want it bombing all the time either.

8: Get a Hard Drive

Every DTP program I know for the Atari has an abysmal time running off floppies. *Timeworks*, *Calamus* and *Pagestream* all benefit greatly from being operated on a hard drive. It also makes your life easier--you don't have to worry about switching disks around all the time, possibly making an error. With a hard drive, you set up some big constants--like a constant directory structure and drive letter. You don't have to worry about where things live as much. For instance, I keep all of my *Pagestream* documents in folders on my E: hard drive within my *Pagestream* PSDOCS folder. This keeps everything organized, and that's not going to change. I don't have to worry about finding a document that I did on a floppy whose only identifying mark is some pizza sauce on the left corner. It's all nice and handy on my hard drive.

7: Get an Accelerator Board

A CPU accelerator board can be extremely beneficial when using DTP software--it can *double* the speed of your computer! Try Fast Technologies' T-16 board, or the new ICD AdSpeed. They both have the ability to put your computer's speed up to 16 MHz and greatly enhance your DTP throughput. It's my estimate that 25 to 45% of the time spent doing DTP work is in "waiting for it to print." How many times can you go get yourself a sandwich? Because DTP can be such a repetitive process (print, examine, fix, print, examine, ad infinitum,) it greatly increases your productivity by increasing the number of revisions you can effectively make in a given time period. Fast Technologies also has a version of their board which speeds up the display of the Viking Moniterm Monitor. That's another nice thing.

6: Consider a Large Screen Monitor

The Moniterm 19" or 24" displays that have been available for the Mega ST's are terrific for DTP work. Imagine being able to see your whole page (in reasonable detail) on a single screen using *Calamus*. That's very, very nice. This ability also is a big boost to productivity, because it allows you to make much better judgments about design *before you ever print out*. This obviously saves more time, not to mention toner, drum life, paper, electricity, and trees.

5: Don't Get Font Happy

When I was 12 or so, I got a program that would let you print out all sorts of different fonts on a dot matrix printer. I thought that was extra cool. Well, one thing I've

learned in the past six years is that there's nothing more annoying to look at than a page full of funny looking fonts. It is seldom necessary to use more than one or two fonts. For large headlines, a display font or a non-serif font can be nice. For a body text, typically a serif font like Times or Garamond is very nice (gee, Joe, what's up with you using a sans-serif font for CN?? *For you Dave, here is a serif Dutch font. -JW*). But that can be a matter of preference and needs to be judged case by case. The moral to this story is not to use a zillion different fonts just because they're there. Let fonts work for you and not against you, by choosing them carefully, distributing them sparsely, and letting them say something about the text.

4: Don't Crowd Your Page

I'm not a great artist. I smiled a lot in my visual fundamentals class in high school. My C+ in Basic Drawing kept me out of at least three honor societies or awards. My only design skill seems to be a rudimentary ability to lay out a page. The one piece of advice I can pass along is not to crowd your page. Because of the incredible amount of information you can fit onto a page using the Atari and DTP software, it's extremely tempting to fill up a whole page with small print and clip art packed in around it. *Don't do this.* It makes for a page with no focal point, no place to start looking, and in me, it induces vomiting. (I keep bad DTP around in the event of food poisoning). Leave some white space as breathing room.

3: Design Your Page First

Again, I'm no Mary Cassatt, but it's important to start with a design for your page. Think of your page as a piece of art, with only shapes on it. How do the shapes of your columns, your boxes, your free floating text, and your clip art interact? Does it get your eye's attention, traverse all the elements of the page, and then hold the attention for a while? It's often much easier to sketch the *shapes* you intend to use on a piece of paper and *then* implement them on the computer.

2: Consider UltraScript, or PostScript in General

The PostScript language is simply amazing. It's been developed to standardize output devices and to allow the maximum resolution possible on any device. It's based on vectors, rather than on bit-mapped pixels (as in GDOS). Output from *PageStream* is *immensely* better using UltraScript than straight from *PageStream*.

The PostScript fonts are better drawn. For the money, UltraScript (for those of you who don't know, it's a PostScript interpreter program for the ST) is a tremendous value. Service bureaus who'll print on color and L300 printers expect postscript output, and you can even send a postscript file over the modem to a service bureau. PostScript will even allow you to print high quality, vector-based graphics that you (or others) create on the Mac, using totally cool programs like *Adobe Illustrator*.

1: Use Clip Art Carefully

It's very tempting to throw in any old random clip art. I can't tell you how bored I am of seeing some IMG file of a 520ST on the back of a user group newsletter. Before using a particular piece of clip art, ask yourself, "Am I putting this here just to fill in space, or will this artwork actually contribute to the design *and* content of what I'm saying on this page?" If you're just putting it there to fill up space, without any regard to design *and* content, then don't put it there. Rearrange the page so that it does fit in with both the design *and* content, or remove it completely if it can't be made to work. The page as a whole shouldn't have any single element that detracts from it. It should be made only of elements that contribute to its solidity.

Future Plans. These hints and tips don't appear in any particular order, but they do provide me with some good ideas about which I might be able to go into more depth in later columns. By all means, if anyone has any suggestions, please let me know. I'd be more than happy to ramble (at great length) about any of them.

Music Notes. Being a watchful Atari owner, I like to report to y'all whenever I can, cool, Atari-related anecdotes. This one's short but mildly interesting. I went to a concert last week (10,000 Maniacs, one of my favorite bunches of musicians), and I noticed that they were using an ST at the sound booth. After the show, I chatted with one of the sound guys, Oliver. I told him that I was the only Atari dealer in Maryland, and that if he ever needed anything, give me a call. I gave him one of my cards.

Oliver spoke with a British accent. I don't know what his affiliation with the band is (the band is from upstate New York, not England). He said that they used their 1040ST to control the effects at the concert--lighting and sound. He said that what I *didn't* have was the software, which was written by Peter Gabriel's engineers. Wow. Peter Gabriel has engineers that write for ST's. That's pretty cool. He also said that when they were on the road he liked to play *Dungeonomaster* and *Chaos Strikes Back* and he remarked as how they were excellent games. That's pretty nice. It's not just all hype.

See You in February. I'll be back here in the next issue with some more exciting things to say, I hope. If you've got anything you'd like to see written about, as always, get in touch with me. Or just call and chat. I like to chat. I've got to go now and write a short story. Old Cecil Johnson never took much stock in tax collectors, poodles, or anything he couldn't buy for five cents. That's not a terrible first line.

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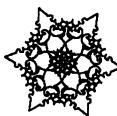
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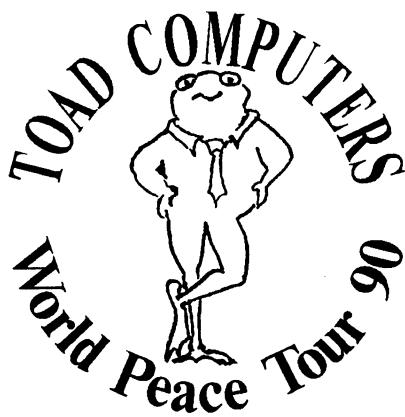
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Their Finest Hour Indeed!

The Best Air War Simulation?

Review by Mike Heininger, (c) 1990

England's and Lucasfilm's Finest Hour

It was a long flight to Atariland, but Lucasfilm's *Their Finest Hour*—The Battle of Britain finally made it during the 50th anniversary of the great air battle. It is an indispensable addition to everyone's aerial combat simulation collection.

But ... hmmnn, isn't *Their Finest Hour* an awful lot like *Battlehawks* 1942? That was Lucasfilm's impressive Pacific carrier air battle simulation released last year (reviewed by Roger Abrams in *Current Notes* November 1989). Yep, the two definitely are much alike. So let's review *Their Finest Hour* in comparison to *Battlehawks* 1942 and occasionally Kesmai's *Air Warrior* on GEnie (GE Network for Information Exchange).

Except for not being able to hook up via cable or modem for multiplayer fun, *Their Finest Hour* is just about flawless entertainment. True, the screens take a little while to load and the opposition fliers are not as formidable as those in *Falcon*, but hell's fire, you call those real problems?

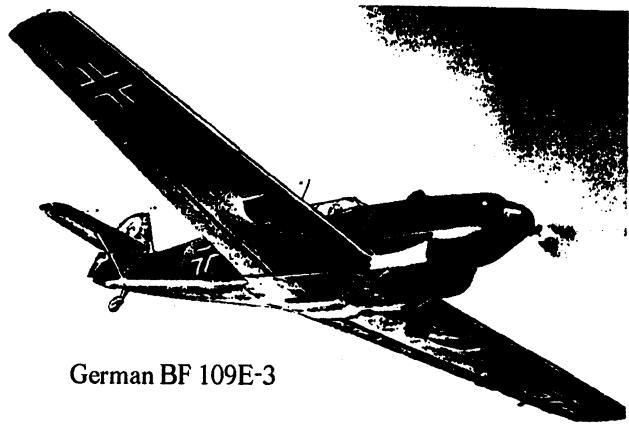
Finest Hour sets such high standards that the excellent compact but comprehensive 192-page manual even has a spiral binding for easy page fixation. The *Battlehawks* manual has 128 pages plus maps, similarly impressive.

So you can better appreciate the real life scenarios you are about to tamper with, the manual provides 34 pages of Historical Perspective, 19 of Pre-Flight Mission Instructions, 24 of In-Flight Mission Instructions, 5 of Post-Flight Mission Instructions, 40 of German and British Aircraft and Weapons, 40 of Flight Fundamentals and Tactics, and a 13-page Appendix that includes Mission Builder, Suggested Reading, Bibliography, and Battle Maps.

Both *Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks* feature disks without copy protection (hallelujah). *Finest Hour* relies on a colorful and easy-to-read code wheel integrated into flights as radio settings. *Battlehawks* is satisfied with aircraft silhouette codes scattered throughout its manual.

Terrific on Hard Disk Drive

As a bonus, both *Their Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks* are among the few games that work great on a hard disk! Both are so well-mannered that you can call



German Bf 109E-3

them up in either medium or low resolution. In medium, the Lucasfilm simulations apparently set themselves to color enhancement in low resolution, unlike *Air Warrior* which looks lush in low but squashed and stark in medium.

Their Finest Hour and *Battlehawks* are not only splendid World War II aerial combat simulations, they are the best available non-modem gunnery and bombing practice for *Air Warrior*, which, unfortunately, does not allow you to fire guns or drop bombs in its off-line practice mode. Flying the Spitfire or Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighters or Ju 88 bomber has much of the feel of the Spitfire, Messerschmitt, and Ju 88 on GEnie, with much more vivid graphics. Ditto for the Zero in *Battlehawks*.

Messerschmitt 109 Surprise

Unlike *Air Warrior* (which now also includes ground combatant T34 tanks, Flakpanzers, and jeeps), *Their Finest Hour* simulates aircraft development in 1940 rather than 1943–44. (Yes, *Battlehawks* obviously simulates 1942 aircraft.) So, it is a surprise to find the earlier model Bf 109 having a better rate of climb than the Spitfire, and the Hurricane to be more durable than either because of its armor and fuselage of metal tubes covered by wood and fabric that facilitate repair.

The fourth fighter simulated is the twin-engine Messerschmitt Bf 110C-4 Zerstorer, envisioned as a long-range escort fighter, but unable to hold its own in dogfights with Spitfires or Hurricanes.

In addition, you can fly any of the four German bombers that attacked England in 1940: the single-engine Junkers Ju 87B-1 Stuka dive bomber or three twin-engine medium bombers—the Dornier Do 17z-2, Heinkel He 111H-3, or Junkers Ju 88A-1, which sometimes was used as a dive bomber.

Don't worry if you're unfamiliar with some of these aircraft—the classy manual has so many photos and summaries of each that you'll soon feel like a veteran of the Luftwaffe or Royal Air Force. And like *Battlehawks* 1942, don't feel like a traitor if you fly enemy aircraft and see what it was like from the opposite point

of view. It's all simulation, yet the frequency of getting shot down makes such games much stronger inducements toward pacifism rather than aggression.

As a matter of fact, since Atari is so popular in Germany as well as England, the term "enemy" becomes relative. There's nothing like global computer markets to foster tactical empathy and equal access to opposing military aircraft.

The 12 aircraft models in *Their Finest Hour* are in three categories: o Single-seat fighter (single-engine Spitfire MK I and MK II, Hurricane MK I, Bf 109E-3 and E-4/B) o Double-seat fighters and dive bombers (twin-engine Bf 110C-4 and C4/B, single-engine Ju 87B-1 and B-2) o Medium bombers with pilot, bombardier, and three to five gunners (twin-engine He 111H-3, Do 17z-2, Ju 88A-1).

Battlehawks, as you may recall, has 12 models of three single-engine aircraft types (fighter, dive bomber, torpedo bomber): the American Navy Wildcat fighter (three versions), Dauntless dive bomber (two versions), and Avenger torpedo bomber (one version) plus two versions each of the Japanese Navy Zero fighter, Val dive bomber, and Kate torpedo bomber.

You guessed it--even considering the twin-engine bombers and single-engine torpedo bombers, *Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks* have very similar aircraft (i.e., nice to have a solid code adaptable to follow-on products). The latest version of *Air Warrior* (2.0b, June 20, 1990) now sports 15 aircraft in World War II (about half available in either the European or Pacific theater), 5 aircraft in World War I, and 3 jets in a sporadic special theater.

Some Minor Blemishes

Since no program is perfect, what is less than optimum with *Their Finest Hour*? Well, as in *Battlehawks*, the panning view is excellent since you can really get a good look at everything going on around you. But it is a little disconcerting to see your entire cockpit display swiveling around with your view. Only the two degree indicators, vertical and horizontal, remind you that your airplane is not scrolling miracle maneuvers.

When bombing or landing, rudder control would help a great deal. Being restricted to banked turns makes it tough to finesse course corrections. Rudder helps enormously in *Air Warrior* bombing, landing, and tight turns.

Unlike *Battlehawks*, in *Finest Hour* you can build your own missions. However, the YES indicators that waypoints will be attacked do not come on as the manual says they will. Hence, we must assume that all waypoints will be attacked, which may not be what we want for course feints (ugh, this is about as picky as you can get in a review!).

Unlike *Air Warrior*, which has one cockpit instrument display (but certainly not view) per computer type, *Their Finest Hour* manages five different cockpit displays: British fighters, German Bf 109, German Bf 110, German Stuka, and German medium bombers. However, when looking left or right from the three German medium bombers, the view again is framed by the front cockpit display with only a "left" or "right" indicator to convince you that the front of your aircraft hasn't snapped off to either side.

While joystick is the recommended control, the Atari Reference Card erroneously claims it has to be plugged into the usual mouse port, No. 1, instead of No. 2 where it customarily resides. That's wrong--leave the joystick in port No. 2. Besides, the mouse works great, and it's good practice for *Air Warrior*, which supports only the mouse. And like many programs, there is no support for TweetyBoard sound enhancement.

So how does *Their Finest Hour* stack up against *Battlehawks* 1942? *Their Finest Hour*, being newer, would be expected to be better, and so it seems to be by a narrow margin. Probably the main reason is that the British and German land-based aircraft are more fun to fly than most of the American and some of the Japanese carrier-based aircraft. *Battlehawks*' poor underpowered Wildcat is particularly grim, stalling more like a transport than a fighter.

If you want some eye-opening comparisons, put the *Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks*' manuals side by side and check their aircraft specifications. The Japanese had some quality equipment long before their present world commercial domination. *Battlehawks* evokes deepest sympathy for any pilot who has to face combat in an inferior aircraft.

Bombers Especially Fun

Finest Hour's twin-engine German medium bombers are especially fun to fly since hopping around between pilot, gunner, and bombardier positions is as easy as pressing the P, G, and B keys. Too bad *Air Warrior* doesn't do the same, although it does let you crew your bomber with a real live human at each gun position, with the pilot also functioning as bombardier.

A diamond-shaped indicator in the *Finest Hour* bomber cockpits shows not only which gun positions are on auto-fire, but from which direction British fighters are attacking. Press G to become the nose gunner, then the 4, 6, 2, or 5 keys on the numerical keypad to switch between left, right, upper (or rear), and bottom (or rear) gun positions. You can fire each gun yourself, or press A to keep it on auto-fire whenever interceptors appear. Like *Battlehawks* 1942, *Their Finest Hour* offers a variety of missions that you can make as simple or complex as you like. Best of all,

most scenarios put you immediately in the action with no tedious takeoff and climb to target area. However, takeoffs and landings--unlike *Battlehawks*--are available options if you prefer. In *Air Warrior*, takeoffs and landings are crucial to mission success.

Controls for *Finest Hour* are pretty much game standard, except L is used for landing gear because G puts you in gunner positions in the bombers or Me 110. C turns on a replay camera offering views much like F-19 *Stealth Fighter* and with more options than *Battlehawks*: from your cockpit, from behind your aircraft, from the target, from your bomb, or from the nearest other aerial object. However, in spite of a rather elaborate VCR-like arrangement, the replay camera runs out of film pretty quickly.

Easy Fly, Easy Quit

After completing your mission, you can receive full credit either by simply pressing Q or by flying back to land at your airfield. If you choose to land, chances are there will be enemy harassment somewhere along the route--as in the real thing, the skies don't ever seem to be peaceful very long.

The Mission Builder feature, not found in *Battlehawks 1942* or most comparable flight simulations, allows you to set up your own battle scenario, even to making a complete campaign of multiple missions over extended time.

You can begin with up to 16 aircraft in each Custom Mission. Without getting into detail, one example is creating three flight groups for a mission--two German, the first with six He 111 bombers, the second with six Bf 109 fighters, opposed by one British with four Spitfires. Each flight group (with a maximum of six aircraft) can be customized from four formations (vic, schwarm, astern, abreast), crew experience, orders, waves (number of times a combat air patrol can be reinforced), and whether you want to fly as leader or wingman.

Realistic or Invulnerable

Their Finest Hour, like *Battlehawks*, can be as realistic or bulletproof as you want. The default is standard, meaning aircraft have the same comparable ammo, fuel, and damage tolerance as experienced during the Battle of Britain. This can be revealing, e.g., the Spitfires have only 300 rounds of ammo for each of their eight .303 caliber machine guns while the Messerschmitt 109 has 1,000 rounds each for its two

7.92 mm machine guns and only 60 rounds each for its two 20 mm cannons.

If you want to be Captain Marvel, you can change all these settings to unlimited and be invulnerable. Needless to say, however, you have to stick to standard settings for your scores to count in the usual progression through ranks and medals.

Opposition skill level can be selected from novice to top ace. Even setup offers a choice between standard or random to determine whether enemy forces will be in the same location every time you fly a particular mission.

Which combat flight simulator is best? *Air Warrior* on GENie takes the crown for ultimate realism in comparable World War II aircraft performance combined with the incredible unpredictability of flying with or against up to some 45 people from all over the country. Like real warfare, *Air Warrior* is getting tougher and tougher as players get more competent, and many band together in quite fearsome squadrons.

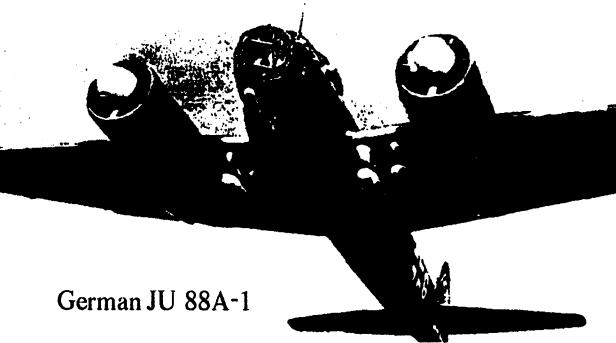
Falcon has to be next best because via cable and modem it also allows engagements with other humans, even if only one on one. In that vein, don't underestimate *SkyChase*. With its split screen, *SkyChase* allows two joystick opponents to fight each other with all sorts of custom handicapping while also seeing what the other is doing. *SkyChase* thus retains a unique wild card niche, sort of like a staff advisor not in the chain of command.

Because *Falcon* simulates probably the best jet dogfighter in history, the F-16, its state-of-the-art exhilaration is unequalled even if its graphics are not quite as striking as those in *Their Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks 1942*. And certainly F-19 *Stealth Fighter* is great fun, though it actually is much more an attack bomber than a fighter.

Favorite Aerial Combat Simulations

If I were starting over today and could acquire only one air combat simulation a month, here's the order in which I'd buy them: *Falcon* (including *Operation Counterstrike*), *Their Finest Hour*, F-19 *Stealth Fighter*, *SkyChase*, *Battlehawks 1942*, *Air Warrior*.

This reflects reasonably affordable satisfaction from a frugal wallet because, otherwise, *Air Warrior*, in a class by itself, would have to be top gun. *Air Warrior* is addictive, frustrating, and very expensive at a minimum \$6 per hour on GENie; hence, only the rich or foolhardy can enjoy it as often as other simulation alternatives.



German JU 88A-1

However you rank your favorites, what greater computer game thrill for the money is there than these terrific aerial combat simulations for Atari STs and Megas? However, lest pacifists reach for their picket signs, we should keep these war games in perspective.

Air War Simulators' Hidden Benefit

Like horror films, combat flight simulations ultimately deter rather than stimulate actual aggression—at least for most “normal” people. Flying these simulators is the quickest way to realize aerial warfare is much less glamorous than it sounds.

The most successful tactics are ambushes out of the sun at high speed from high altitude. The more you mix it up in furball fights, the sooner you get killed. More top aces are assassins than duelers simply because, hey, nobody likes to be a loser. And if the few bold duelers get too good, crack the door, Molly, so we can plug the varmints in the back! Practice safe fly—always go up with a friend. Beware the Hun in the sun and the gun with a pun.

If every teenager in the world could try military simulations, the chances of more real wars would drop considerably. Simulations are relentless in drumming home the bottom line: fight long enough and sooner or later you die prematurely. Skill and luck determine how long you last in combat; when either inevitably expires, so do you.

So, instead of the ultimate quest being “What cause is worth risking my life for?”, a more sensible alternative becomes “Can’t we, as reasonable human beings, discuss our differences and work out mutually acceptable solutions?” Which also can be (yawn) simulated (e.g., *Balance of Power 1990*)—which also shows why the big money remains in vicarious thrills we prudents dare not risk in real life.

Available from Lucasfilm Games; Buckingham Mews; High Street; Old Amersham, Bucks; HP7 ODP; United Kingdom. List price: \$59.95; available from L&Y for \$42.99. Requires mouse or joystick. Runs on 512k but certain graphic enhancements appear only on 1MB. easily on hard drive. Not copy-protected but requires code word authentication via cipher wheel.)

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RATES AN "A"!

Review by Sam Van Wyck

"Power without the price!" We all know that slogan. In fact, one of the never-ending wonders of Atari is the amount of computer power, utility and downright FUN that is delivered inside each package. It's hard to be humble when watching someone limp through a session with an overpriced, silent IBM-type kluge; especially when you know just a few point-and-clicks on your trusty Atari would have the job done in a fraction of the time; in full color with stereo accompaniment if desired. Yep—we certainly do have those poor clods beat by a country mile. Don't we?!

Well, almost. There is the matter of the ST keyboard. Anybody trying to do any serious writing requiring speed and accuracy will surely curse its creator as a sadistic genius. The old 800, though it lacked many of the keyboard functions we have come to take for granted on the ST, had a far better "touch" and key shape. Basically, the ST has three major faults.

A keystroke begins with a downward motion of the finger on the keytop. At some point, an event will take place causing a code signal to be generated, signifying that a specific character is desired. This event may take place close to the beginning of the downward stroke with the balance of motion accomplishing nothing except to provide the elusive quality known as "touch." Other keyboards will require that the key be almost at the lowest portion of its travel before a contact is made. The ST keyboard is an example of the former; very little travel is needed to create an alphanumeric signal.

By itself, this would not be particularly troublesome were it not for two additional factors. First, there is the shape of the keytops themselves. The second is the extremely light touch needed to depress a key. The ST and Mega keytops are almost square, having a slightly greater width than height. Most of the keyboards that accompany other computers have this characteristic reversed; the height being somewhat greater than the width. As a result, on the ST and Mega, the lateral space between the keys is very small and it is quite easy to bridge from one to another when typing.

Even this would not prove too great a disadvantage were it not for the third element, a very lightly spring-loaded key. Now, the slightest touch on an adjacent key is enough to cause an unwanted character to appear.

Actually, the old 800 keyboard was far more forgiving of our typing sins. If the operator touched two

keys simultaneously, only one letter would reach the screen. Maybe it could sense which was pressed first and electronically block the output of the second. Whatever the case, if two keys were pressed at once, there was a fifty-fifty chance that the correct letter would appear on the screen.

Not so considerate of human frailties are our STs and Megas. Hit two keys and you get two letters; no odds on getting only the right one here! Back up and correct, again and again and...

Springtime Comes to the ST Keyboard

Eventually, someone realized that a stronger spring under the key would eliminate at least one-third of the problem. Diamond Design of Long Beach, CA encouraged you to "give your computer a professional feel" (Does anyone ever read this ad copy before putting it out on the street?) by placing new springs under the keys. A pack of 80 or so was available from several sources for around fifteen dollars. In an hour's time, given a little patience, an entire keyboard could be changed to a distinctly heavier touch. Sure enough, the double stroke problem was greatly reduced. Unfortunately, so was the "feel" of the keyboard. While there was never a crisp click from an unmodified key, either audible or tactile, there was a sort of "bottoming-out" effect that told your finger to let up, the job was done. The springs, while eliminating most of the double strokes, also eliminated any last vestige of "click" feedback to the operator.

The Solution

The answer to the problem would be to substitute another keyboard for the one originally supplied with the ST and that is exactly what the Z-Keys modification makes possible. For \$90 plus shipping, an adaptor is available from Zubair Interfaces, Inc., the Z-Ram people, which adapts any XT-compatible keyboard to the Atari ST and Mega.

The Z-Keys interface is a one by three inch circuit board designed to be mounted on top of your computer's metal RF shield. A six inch jumper cable provides the connection between the interface and the motherboard while the keyboard socket goes to the interface. Minimal, but adequate, illustrated instructions accompany the package. A standard DIN-5 extension cable is included to connect to the interface and bring a socket outboard for connection to the new keyboard.

I think I must have a non-standard 1040ST! Whenever I buy something that is supposed to fit inside—it won't. According to the illustration, the interface should have been placed under or behind the keyboard, next to the disk drive. Naturally, there was absolutely no way this could be accomplished. The cable reach was too short to allow the interface to be placed anywhere other than under the keyboard where

there was inadequate clearance. But, that may be solely my problem. There is no reason to assume that others will encounter the same difficulty.

Adequate space was available, though, near the rear of the unit, midway between the power supply and floppy drive. Best of all, the board could be oriented so that the socket was directly accessible from the rear creating, in effect, another I/O port without any dangling cables. It was necessary to extend the keyboard and jumper wires by approximately six inches; a simple but tedious process. The board was mounted by means of a dual-sided sticky pad providing a grip quite adequate to hold it in place against normal insertion and removal forces. A bit of judicious round file work quickly created a neat and functional opening for the keyboard connector.

The Test Drive

With the installation complete, a neighboring office was looted of its Omnikey/102 keyboard, the selector set to "XT" mode and the computer booted. Nothing! No mouse, no letters--nothing! Omnikey was returned and another office looted, this time of a Northgate board. Switch to XT: Nothing! Obviously the installation was wrong or the jumpers were defective. It was time for drastic measures. I called the manufacturer.

"Try another keyboard" was the answer. I'd tried two but was willing to have another go. This time I tried a real IBM keyboard that had been in use almost as long as there were computers. Bingo! Numbers, letters, mouse tracks; everything worked!

It seems that not all IBM-style keyboards are the same. A second call to the manufacturer resulted in a conversation with the boss himself, Abu Zubair. Some keyboards, he explained, vary widely from the IBM standard. While the associated processor may function despite this handicap, the Z-Keys interface is a trifle picky about the timing of the data it receives and as a result some keyboards will be incompatible. In gathering data for this review, about a third failed to function.

Since most new users of an interface will need to purchase a keyboard compatible with the modified Atari, Zubair has a deal you really shouldn't refuse. For \$49.95, they will sell you an enhanced keyboard

guaranteed to work with Z-Keys and let you try it for ten days. Somehow, I just don't see the manager of a downtown Washington computer store letting you take a board home to try with your Atari!

Once installed and operating, the new keyboard will still have one or two gaps in its operation. First, the numerical keypad will not function without a software patch now being developed by Zubair which will be sent free to all registered owners. It seems the IBM numerical keypads return a different code than those in the alphanumeric section. It should be noted that the Atari keyboard continues to be fully functional while the replacement is connected.

Due to the great variety of keyboard designs, there are bound to be functions which are not common to all. For instance, the 1040's HELP and UNDO keys are far from universal. In order

to make fullest use of the features of a third-party keyboard, another program is being developed which will activate the F11 and F12 keys as well as several others. This one will not be a freebie.

Z-Keys has already been accepted within the European Atari community. At the Dusseldorf Exposition, a number of cases and racks were available to mount the original keyboard while allowing access to the disk drive and controls. If your desk space is limited, an over/under arrangement might be desirable.

Brighter Keys Ahead

Is it worth opening the computer to install the Z-Keys mod, putting up with an extra keyboard and spending better than \$100 for the privilege? If typing speed and accuracy are important to you, the answer has got to be "yes!" In the course of writing this review, I don't believe I have made as many as a dozen double-key errors. Using the original keyboard, there would have been well over a hundred. My only problem now is that my 520ST at home remains unmodified. The thought of having to return to those not so thrilling days of yesteryear on the original keyboard is a gloomy one.

[Z-Keys, \$99.95, Zubair Interfaces, Inc., 5243 B Paramount Blvd. Lakewood CA 90712, Telephone 213-408-6715.]

Day of the Viper

Arcade Action and Exploration in the 24th Century

Review by Alfred C. Giovetti

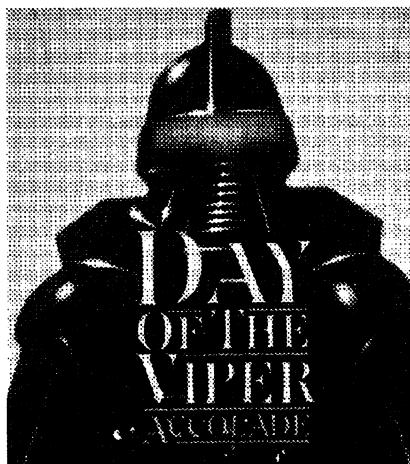
The Adventure Begins

"He was designed to explore parts of the galaxy too hostile for human life. Now humankind depends on him for its survival. Viper V. Since 2782 A.D., a war has raged between the planets of the Sun League and Gar-1, the ruthless master of a mechanoid race. Now his robotic army has seized a vital defense base in the Parin system. But there is hope. Viper V, under your control, may be able to infiltrate the heavily armed base undetected and re-activate the defense computer--thus destroying the orbiting mechanoid fleet. The time has come to teach Gar a painful lesson. *Never wake a sleeping giant.*" Thus begins this highly complex, sophisticated game with high potential.

This action adventure arcade game is set in the year 2307. (You will note that there is a 775 year discrepancy in the dates given in the game manual and the game promotional literature.) GAR stands for Genetic Android Race. GAR was developed by corporate government R&D contractors. A side effect of the neurosynthetic melding of machine and man that produced the biotechnotic cyborg race was excruciating neural pain. This pain drove the GAR mad. The GAR have been conducting a genocidal war against man for 300 years. This plot sounds like the plot to an episode of *Battlestar Galactica*, a television series from the 1970's that used Viper fighters and had a cyborg race that looked exactly like the Viper V drone.

Your mission is to retake the Sun League's Defense Base. In order to retake the base, you will need to search the base for 25

floppy disks. There is one floppy disk on each level of the maze. You must reload the disks into the Command Post Main Computer, which will reactivate the base's main planetary defense system that will destroy the GAR invaders within the base and the GAR war fleet orbiting the planet.



The Layout of the Maze

Day of the Viper is basically a maze game with no wilderness areas. The defense base has a total of 25 levels, which consist of five buildings each five stories high. Each story is made up of a maze of hallways and rooms. Each level of each building has one each of six specialized rooms. Communication rooms give you important messages which make up the plot for the game, provided you have installed the communications module found in the maze on level one, building one. Power rooms can restore your Viper V to full power once you find the energy syphon which is hidden deep in the maze. Repair rooms can fully repair your viper once you find the repair module, which is also deep in the maze. Security rooms reactivate the

Anti-Intruder system which will disable all GAR robots on your current level of the maze, provided you have found a security room activator also hidden in the maze. Turbo-lift rooms allow you to go from one floor to another. Storage rooms have up to six important pieces of equipment for your Viper, provided you find the appropriate Security Lock code hidden somewhere on each floor of the maze. Shuttle rooms are located on the bottom floors of buildings 1 to 4 and on the top floors of buildings 2 to 5. Shuttles contained in the rooms take you from one building to another. The shuttle on the fifth (bottom) floor of building one takes you to the first (top) floor of building two, and so on.

A Colorful Game

Everything in *Day of the Viper* is colored in blue, green, yellow, red and white in ascending order of power or sophistication. The colors are used for energy crystals, weapons modules, shield modules, damage levels, card keys, door codes, building codes and other things. Every building has color coded doors to rooms: blue, green, yellow, red and white. There are five color-coded key cards in the maze, one key for each color door. The blue card found on floor one of building one opens only blue doors. The white card, found in building five, opens all doors. Each card opens doors of its own color and doors of any preceding color, so that the yellow card opens blue, green and yellow doors (not red or white doors). I found these access cards to be the most painful part of the game. You need the white card to open all the doors on a level so

you must search all 25 levels for the white card and then return to all 25 levels to open the unopened doors on those levels.

The B.U.D. Light

The Viper V does not have any attributes to develop, such as strength, stamina, dexterity, hit points, intelligence, piety, etc. However, the Viper V does have an impressive number of statistics to keep track of on its colorful and graphic mouse-controlled screen. The screen has a bar across the top which contains the message display and the building and floor numbers. Below this bar are 10 compartments called "holding boxes," similar to pouches or pockets, that can hold various objects that you find in the maze. Below the inventory "list" we find an automapping feature on a large screen to the left and a heads-up-display on the right. In the center, between these displays, we find the compass heading indicator (north, south, east, or west), the date, and the status indicator (green, yellow alert and red alert).

Below the displays of the maze we find a row of mouse-activated buttons which act to toggle on or off certain Viper V functions. Each toggle has a small light panel adjacent to show on or off status of the device toggle. The circuit board toggle replaces the automap display with a circuit board, described below. The short range scanner button activates a device that reveals unexplored portions of the maze directly surrounding your present location. The scanner shows the position of enemy GAR robots close to you. The weapons activation toggle turns the weapons system on and off. The weapons system is composed of one upgradable weapons module, or gun, that is fired with the left mouse button. The screen or protective field toggle activates a standard upgradable screen module. The plotter button activates the auto-

mapping feature or plotter display which remembers and shows the explored and scanned areas of the maze. The disk menu toggle activates the disk menu options screen, which appears in the plotter display area. The disk menu conveniently allows you to load, save or quit the game at any time during play.

The directional arrows of forward, right, left, and backward are laid out on the display in identical fashion to the keyboard cursor keys, but, unfortunately, the keyboard keys are **not** functional. This prevents two handed play which was so useful in *Dungeon Master/Chaos Strikes Back* and *Bloodwych*. At the bottom of the screen are found several bar graph readouts that display the status of vital levels. The weapon temperature gives you an idea of when the weapons will overheat and shut down. The shield strength gauge gives you an idea of when the shield will fail and allow enemy fire or traps to damage your Viper. The energy level gauge lets you know when energy is low. The Battered Unit Damage light or B.U.D. light was the most humorous aspect of the display that used the aforementioned five colors to indicate damage levels of the enemy GAR robots.

The Viper Circuit Board

When the Viper V Drone was teleported into the base in a manner to avoid the detection of the orbiting enemy fleet, the circuit board was damaged. In order to restore your Viper to full functional capacity, these damaged circuit board components must be replaced. Circuit board components can be damaged by traps and enemy robots which will require replacement. You must find these components in the maze. Thirteen modules must be found and installed, including gyroscopic stabilizer, teleport neutralizer, proximity mine neutralizer, de-plotter neutralizer, proton mine deflector, com-

municator, computer interface, disrupter neutralizer, shield element, plotter module, disk controller circuit (allows you to upload the floppies into your hard drive), weapon element and scanner module. Some elements, like the shield and weapon, can be replaced with ever increasingly powerful modules, color coded to their increasing power. (You guessed it. The colors are: blue, green, yellow, red and white.) Some components have the effect of protecting the Viper against various traps and weapons at the disposal of the GAR. All elements can be damaged by various objects and opponents in the maze, requiring the element's replacement.

Combat Is Fierce & Furious

The Parin defense base has been invaded by 33 types of GAR robots. Robots have the ability to attack you from up to four directions at once and in waves of up to four robots, one after another. Each enemy GAR has a personality and a design uniquely its own. The "attack logic" differs from robot type to robot type. The robots can trap you at a crossroads in a four-way crossfire which is deadly. The robots increase in their ingenuity and strength of weapons, shields, armor and mobility. Once you get started and survive the first few levels, the arcade action does not continue to dominate the game. As your Viper becomes stronger and the opponents become relatively weaker, you can settle down to exploration and puzzle solving. When firing on a GAR robot, it is very important to remember that you shoot for the lightest or hottest spot on the robot. The lightest or hottest spot is color coded in the colors blue, green, yellow, red and white (white is the hottest/lightest).

Many of the modules on the circuit board can be damaged by various traps in the maze. There are six types of traps, including those that teleport, gyroscope (rotate or

spin) and de-plot (scramble the automap). The other traps are bombs: proton mines (damage a chip on the circuit board), proximity mines (reduce power) and enemy disrupter mines (cause damage to the Viper). Having all the modules protects you against these traps and the damage they can cause.

Automapping

Day of the Viper has some excellent features and enhancements. The game has a good system of automapping and scanning. Scanning and mapping uses energy, which is important in the early game where you spend much of your time looking for the blue, green, yellow, red and white energy crystals to recharge the Viper V energy cells. De-plotter traps can scramble and erase your electronic maps, making them virtually useless. Paper maps can be eliminated for most situations, but prepare to be frustrated and even angry when the de-plotter trap does its work. The best automapping system that I have seen is the one used in *Dark Heart of Uukrul* which has a labeling feature, and a scrolling map that can display any part of the map by scrolling around the computer image.

Object Management

Day of the Viper has a sophisticated "object management system," like the one in *Ultima VI*, *Dungeon Master/Chaos Strikes Back* and *Circuit's Edge*. When you drop an object, it stays there and will be there if you go back to get it. I prefer this to the drop-and-lose-an-essential-object scenario that most other games have. This feature allows you to leave objects, but go back and get them if you later find you need them.

Computer Notepad

Day of the Viper has a "computer notepad" which keeps a running record of important data and

locations with the press of a button. The computer notepad in the Viper V is a manual one, but it still helps eliminate some of the paper records. The computer notepad keeps track of the locations of the important rooms on each floor and the plot related messages you receive when you visit the communications rooms on each of the 25 floors. The best computer notepad is the one in *Circuit's Edge*, where a running record of all important conversations is automatically stored and is available for review at the push of a button. This feature takes little memory since the computer already has the conversations and locations in storage and only needs remember which ones to replay.

One feature that I would like to see in the new games is a print feature: the ability to print character stats, maps, clues, and a running record of conversations. Why do we buy the most sophisticated record keeping devices in the world and use them to play games that require paper records?

Puzzle-solving

The only puzzle-solving in this game consists of the identification of objects and their uses. Otherwise, the game is an "explore, map and accumulate artifacts" game that has an arcade flavor. You find yourself looking for fuel, disks, damage repair globes, and other objects; and then you have to find out how to use the objects. The puzzle solving was at the beginner level or nonexistent.

The Box and Accessories

Day of the Viper has on-disk copy protection for the Atari ST version, in addition to a key symbol system. The Amiga and IBM versions have no on-disk protection. The key symbol copy protection is from a slide rule-like device that allows you to match symbols from the device with symbols that are

displayed from on-screen circuit board schematics when you first load the game. In addition to the two single sided disks provided, there is a card with backup instructions and a 24-page manual with complete background, concise play instructions and detailed useful information about the objects in the game. I found the backup utility instructions confusing. You cannot back up the disks using the TOS copy routine but must use the backup program provided on the disks. The backup program uses a bit copier to copy the disks. Due to the on-disk copy protection, I was unable to use a double-sided drive for both disks and this required some disk swapping to boot the game, but no disk swapping to play. The bit copier backup program allows for installation on a hard drive. I had a problem with "quit" command bombing out with disk II in the drive and the game not being saved. Another limitation was that you could save only one game per backup disk.

Conclusions

Day of the Viper is for beginning adventurers who enjoy easy arcade shoot-the-robot games and find-and-install-the-object plots. The game has sophisticated features of simultaneous automapping and heads-up display, convenient game save, computer notepad and advanced object management. *Day of the Viper* is not much of an adventure game. The graphics are quite good, but not excellent or striking. The use of color and the organization of the game is so very systematic as to be a little annoying. I found the plot weak. If you like arcade action in an adventure game format, *Day of the Viper* may be for you. I cannot recommend the game to the veteran adventurer or computer role playing gamer.

Accolade, 550 S. Winchester Blvd., Suite 200, San Jose, CA 95128, Telephone 1-408-985-1700. Price \$49.95..

RISK

A Board Game Superbly Translated
Reviewed by George Hulseman

They're Baaack! "They're Back" taunts the magazine advertisement, referring to computer editions of four classic board games, *Risk*, *Monopoly*, *Clue* and *Scrabble*. My first question was, "Why bring them back at all?" Why would anyone want to play a board game on a computer? And how good are these translations? I'll try to answer these deep, mind-boggling questions, but because I have time for just one, I chose to review the classic computer board game of *Risk*.

My first question can easily be answered based on my limited experience with *Risk*. First of all, the computer takes much of the drudgery out of playing these board games by taking over such monotonous tasks as rolling the dice and moving the little playing pieces around. Secondly, the computer makes a formidable opponent and is always around when you want to play a game. Simple enough. By the way, it's a superb translation if not a bit buggy. More on that later.

The World Is the Limit. For the uninitiated, *Risk* is a classic Parker Brothers board game of military strategy in which up to six players compete to conquer the world. The playing field is a map of the world (with some liberties taken to facilitate play) divided into 42 territories. The player who controls all the territories wins the game.

The computer gives you the opportunity to use U.K. rules which are different from the standard U.S. rules. There are also numerous other options which allow you to speed up game play, or to play short versions if you don't have a lot of time. Another advantage of using a computer to play board games is that the computer keeps track of a given set of rules and won't let you stray from them--unless, of course, you choose the cheat option.

Each player begins with a limited number of armies, which he places on

his various territories. Players can attack each other or fortify positions or do both in any given turn. An attack consists of one or more battles which are fought with the dice. The attacker is allowed to use one, two, or three dice based on how many armies he has in the attacking territory. The defender can use no more than two. The more dice you roll, the greater the odds of winning.

Every turn begins with an allotment to each player of armies based on how many territories he controls. If a player controls an entire continent he gets bonus armies. He also gets an opportunity to trade *Risk* cards in for additional armies. You get a *Risk* card at the end of each turn if you conquer at least one territory.

The Smoker You Drink the Player You Get. You select the skill level for each computer player or select "human" if you want to play against other people. Up to six can play and if late at night you decide you want to play a game, it's no problem to drum up several computer players to compete against. In fact, even if you're playing against another human being or two, I would recommend throwing in a couple of computer players just to make things interesting. Computers don't smoke, they don't use foul language, and when you get tired of them you turn them off. More importantly, they finish their moves faster than you can say Parker Brothers or Virgin Mastertronic.

By the way, the computer plays a mean game of *Risk*. When you're playing against several computer opponents at the same time (all on the highest skill level, of course), you're in for a match that can take several hours and will usually result in your decimation. All the games I played were rather engrossing and certainly challenging.

The interface is well-constructed and easy to use. To play *Risk* on the computer is as intuitive as, say, rolling dice. Your view is limited to a small portion of the world during game play, although you can get an overview at any time. Scrolling of the map is achieved by using the mouse, which is

also used to click on all options. The graphics are pleasing to the eye.

Bugs Included. As I have mentioned, the version I reviewed was rather buggy. On several occasions the program simply froze when I tried to input a move and the only solution was to reboot. Also, the save game option does not work at all on the ST version. I called Virgin Mastertronic and they told me they were correcting the bugs and would exchange the new version for the old if you simply mailed it in. The program is not copy-protected so you can use a copy while you're waiting for the new version.

All in all, the computer version of *Risk* is very true to the original board game with a lot of options thrown in and good colorful graphics, too. If you enjoy playing the board game you can be virtually assured of being satisfied with the computer game.

Risk, \$39.95, 18001 Cowan, Suites A & B, Irvine, CA 92714, 1-714-833-8710



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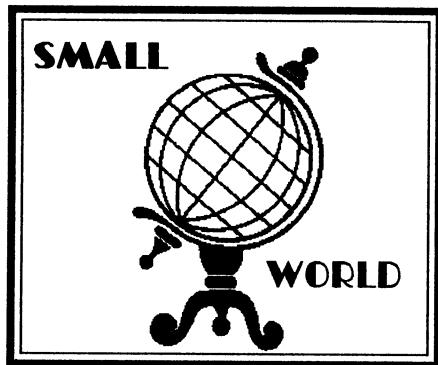
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Introduction

I've seen the most amazing thing, and I'm basically bursting to tell you about it. And it's from *Atari*! You know, "Comdex was Awful" Atari. You know, "Sinking Stock" Atari. You know, "Doom and Gloom" Atari.

All I can say is that I bought Atari stock some time ago... and after what I saw last weekend, I'm not about to sell it. Seriously, hang on, folks: this game is going extra innings.

Each year, there's a gathering of computer wizards called "Hacker Con"; this year was its sixth anni-

The Incredible Atari Hotz Box

by: David Small

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versary. Longtime readers know I go and get blown away by the high powered stuff being shown there ... for instance, Pixar's Academy Award winning computer animation was premiered at HackerCon. *That* sort of stuff gets presented there.

This year, the Atari Hotz Box was at Hackers, thanks to about 12 hours of driving from Jimmy Hotz—and it was *Atari* that blew people's minds at the show. Jimmy was mobbed whenever he'd turn the machine on. He literally showed the machine all day, then until 4 am next morning, both days last weekend. (Jimmy is now sporting major-league circles under the eyes).

I repeat, these people are not your normal crowd; among them are the pioneers of computers in general, modern-day visionaries, and so on. More than a few of them, from other companies, were eyeing the hardware hungrily; one

comment was, "Do you suppose this hotel will mind the drool on the floor?"

I saw people who had never played a keyboard produce music, and more importantly, with smiles on their faces. I saw people who HAD played keyboards approach the unit with hesitation—and after a five minute break-in, be rolling along. It was stunning.

The Box

So what is this thing, anyway? Atari marketing hasn't the vaguest idea. Their literature is terrible; it doesn't tell what the box is or its power. There have even been heated anti-Hotz box discussions online—based on the incomplete information Atari has put out. For instance, the Hotz Box's purpose is NOT just to be a keyboard that *you can't hit a wrong note on*.

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And the thing *looks* like a keyboard. Thus, people think of it as yet-another-electric-piano, although it does have "2001: A Space Odyssey" styling. In reality, it is only distantly related to a keyboard. The Hotz Box mixes, unquestionably, the hottest trend in software today, object orientation, with music. It is the first object-oriented music device I have ever seen. It is an important and strong leap ahead in technology, and yes, it's very, very well done.

The Hardware

There are two main parts to the unit. There's the Hotz Box itself, and its software. The Box is a device laid out to resemble a keyboard, with many "pads" on it. Each pad is ultra-sensitive to the touch, utilizing a neat resistor technology (FSR's, force sensitive resistors). These pads are not on-off, like (say) an Atari 400 keyboard; they have a whole range of response, from a light touch to the hardest whap!. (My son Jamie has

walked on this box. My other kids have committed war crimes to it. It is very tough; it is built for on-the-road musicians to toss into swimming pools and then work with.)

This box has a MIDI output. MIDI is a universal standard among music hardware for talking. (Your Atari features built-in MIDI support; that's those two five-pin jacks you were wondering about on your ST). The box does not generate any sound as such; it generates MIDI signals. Literally, "A key is pressed; it is pressed *this* hard; it is now released..." and so forth.

Now you can use the keyboard box just like that if you plug it into any MIDI device that takes MIDI input and makes sound from it, say, a Casio, DX-7, or nicer hardware like a Proteus synthesizer. As you would expect, the better the hardware, the better the sound.

The keyboard box costs around \$5,500. I know, I know! Please keep reading. That's for a professional unit that studio musicians will go

nuts over while making records. You don't need that, neither do I; more on this later.

The keyboard unit is around 10 percent, by Jimmy's estimate, of the final complete product. The other 90% is the software, which runs on an Atari computer *you must supply*. Any ol' ST will work; the STacy is certainly the handiest.

While the keyboard alone is neat (you can do "runs" on it, playing it like a harp, and create sounds impossible on a regular style keyboard), the magic is in the software.

And you can buy this program for \$200, and use it on whatever MIDI hardware *you* have. ANTIC software will be distributing the software, I understand, as of this writing, as soon as the manual is done.

The Software

Explaining the software is where Atari's marketing has fallen apart. They just don't understand what the machine is capable of. Let me give it my best try, and next

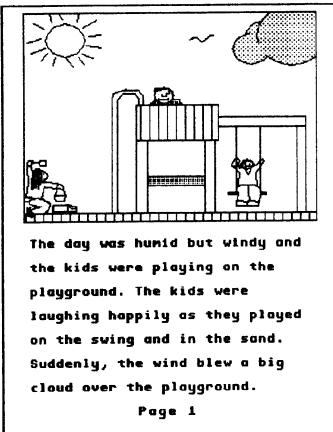
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Wayne Gretzky Hockey

If You Like Sports Simulations, Here's One You Shouldn't Miss

Reviewed by George Hulseman

Let's face it. Ice hockey is no glamorous sport. In fact, it's a downright strange game if you think about it. The players skate around at top speed all in pursuit of this little black thing that moves, roughly, at the speed of sound. Amidst all this there is much fighting, kicking, spearing, holding, charging, elbowing, hooking, high-sticking, and, my favorite, tripping. Every once in awhile someone scores a goal. It's silliness and rough-housing wrapped in one. Actually, there's a lot more to the game than that. This is what the people at Bethesda Softworks show us with their latest sports release for the ST, *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*. Their efforts have paid off with an action-packed and strategy-oriented simulation that's worthy of its famous namesake.

The Team of Your Dreams. Several years in development, *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* has the makings of a great sports simulation. As Gretzky himself states in the foreword, playing this simulation

will teach you something about the game of hockey. An interesting



aspect of the game is that you control a single player while the computer handles the rest of your teammates. Seeing the miniature players skating around makes you realize what a remarkable feat of programming this is. Each man plays his part with expertise and whether you are playing against a human or computer opponent,

you'll have your hands full against the computer-controlled players.

You can design your own team and adjust the skill levels of each player to match your playing style. My playing style is, well, suffice it to say I get penalized a lot. There are many options available, both in creating a team and in setting up the parameters of gameplay. This package has plenty to offer.

What? No Playoffs? But, alas, nothing is perfect. Most sports simulations these days give you the option of playing in some sort of league so that you can take a team of your making through the playoffs and then to a final championship game or series. You don't get this option with *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*, although a companion program will become available later (supposedly by Christmas). While it's good that add-on programs will become available, I can't help feeling I'm being milked by the company for an option that, perhaps, should have been included in the original game package.

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What *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* does come with are two game disks that include six ready-made teams modeled after some of the top teams in the NHL and a concise and informative manual. As I have mentioned, you can make up your own team and adjust the attributes of any player in 11 different ways from strength and shooting ability to how often he is penalized.

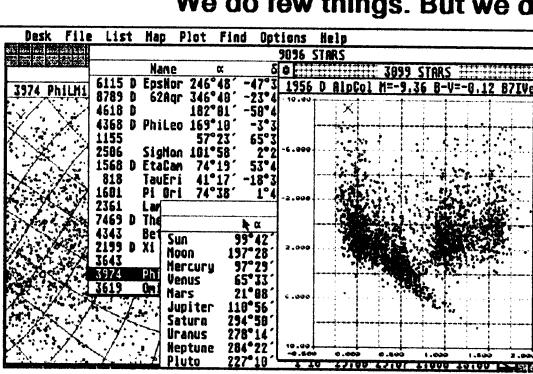
You get a bird's eye view of the rink with about 75 percent of a scrolling rink visible at any one time. The player you control is distinguishable from the rest of the clan by his white helmet. When a goal is scored you get to see a flashy scoreboard where it shows who scored the goal and which player(s), if any, assisted. When a penalty is called, you see an animated referee display the appropriate signal and the names of the violators.

The Bruisers vs the Smashers. Fighting is a very real part of the game of ice hockey and is included in this simulation. If a fight breaks out your view again switches to the screen where you will become witness to a digitized animated fight sequence. There is a short wait while that sequence loads from disk. Fight mode can be disengaged and since both players are always taken out of action it doesn't seem to make that much of a difference. But such scenes can give you a bit of a breather during a fast-paced game and if digitized sequences are your thing, you can spend even more money and order fight disks from Bethesda Softworks, again available at Christmas.

There are five players on each team, but you can lose players to injuries or penalties at any time during game. You can play any position you want, except for goalie. If the man you control gets sent to the penalty box, the computer automatically gives you another position to control. That way you're always in the action.

No Heroics Allowed. The interesting thing about *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* is that it casts you as a team player. Your computer teammates seem to have a mind of their own and you have to work with them to be successful. Passing is essential. When you're open they will pass the puck to you. Conversely, you have to pass to them when they get open. Most goals are accomplished with team work. It can be just as gratifying to get an assist as scoring a goal. Control of the player is with either joystick or mouse; however, I found it very difficult and awkward with the latter. I highly recommend the joystick unless you plan to coach only. The program gives you the option of playing and coaching at the same time, or you can let the computer do everything while you simply watch.

A Winner. There are numerous other options, from adjusting game speed and level of difficulty to the length of the period. You can play either regular season or playoff games (sudden death). Call a timeout anytime during a game and you can see an instant replay of the last 14 seconds of action with adjustable speed in forward or reverse. You can display or print game stats or any team's roster for easy reference. As a coach, you can make line changes or call plays with a push of a button. In desperate situations, you can pull your goalie to get an extra player on the ice, usually done in the closing seconds of a game in which you are behind. The program really is brimming with options. If you're like me and you like sports simulations, this is one you shouldn't miss. Just in time for the upcoming season.

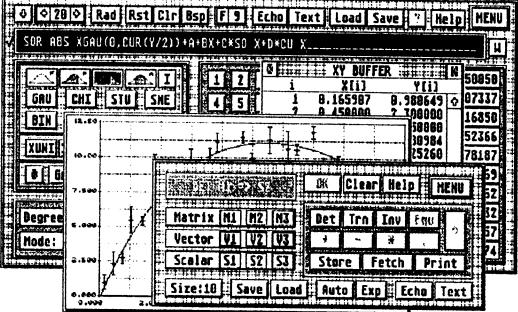


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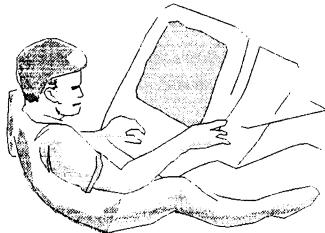


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How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Atari?

by Ron Seckinger

A Certitude

The only sure thing in the Atari community is that every magazine, user-group meeting, and day's worth of BBS messages will contain multiple complaints about the Tramiel family's lack of support for, and interest in, U.S. Atari owners. Less frequently, someone comments on the fact that many of those who purchase Atari computers never become part of the community--either giving up and switching to a PC or Mac, or simply settling for word processing without fully exploring their machine's capabilities.

Anybody Out There?

Anyone else see a connection here? If Atari owners in the United States number only some 200,000 and constitute just 2 percent of the personal-computer market, the newcomer probably will have trouble finding a support network, particularly if he or she is a computer novice. The local community college is unlikely to offer a course on "How to Use Your ST," and the language spoken at the nearby user group is no more comprehensible than Urdu. No wonder that many new Atari owners succumb to frustration within a few months and either bail out or lower their expectations.

Since years of whining have failed to change the Tramiels' attitudes, responsibility for incorporating new owners into the Atari community devolves, by default, on the user groups. In a recent *Junkyard Pussycat* column ("What's With the User Groups?" *Current Notes*, September 1990), John Barnes makes some useful suggestions for filling the gap, and the present article is offered in the same vein. But before getting down to specifics, let me make a few observations, based on my own case, about the kinds of problems faced by computer novices.

Brave New World

In May 1987 I decided to use my tax return for a home computer instead of a new sound system. Committed to completing a book, I wanted a word processor for myself and even made a few phone calls to investigate the inexpensive Magnavox model. But I ultimately opted for a computer in the hopes that my teenaged son might get into programming. At the time, my computer experience was limited to word processing on a Delta Data at the office. A colleague suggested I talk to someone at Diskcovery, a computer

store about 20 minutes from home, where a sales clerk quickly passed over an Amiga to recommend an Atari 1040ST. Back at the office, two friends who owned Atari 8-bit machines went into raptures at the mention of an ST, and I took their word for it. (One subsequently bought an ST; the other, an Amiga.) Within a week, Diskcovery had sold me a 1040ST with color monitor, a Star NX-10 printer, Word Writer ST, a box of computer paper, a surge protector, an entire box of 10 diskettes, two games, a programming guide for kids, one copy of *Start*, and two of *Current Notes*. The adventure had begun.

Getting started was inauspicious, to say the least. Just removing the components from their boxes and hooking them up properly required several hours and a few phone calls to the store, and that was the easy part. Once I actually got to the point of booting up, I discovered that Word Writer mysteriously printed a "5" at the top of the first page of any document, and a row of bombs periodically appeared on the screen as the system crashed. Moreover, the ST manual, while simple and straight-forward, never seemed to contain the answers to my questions. "ARGGH!" quickly became my mantra but was no more effective than assorted expletives in persuading my machine to work like I wanted. Eventually, thanks to the patience and support of the folks at Diskcovery--who exchanged my original computer module and cleared up the glitch in the word processing software--I figuratively crossed the mountains and was ready to descend into the happy valley beyond.

Computer Argo

Instead, I seemingly entered a Dark Continent where the laws of logic and physics operated on principles unknown to me and where the locals spoke a mysterious argot of blitters, sectors, GDOS, and dot-inf files. (I assumed a "root directory" would tell me how to locate a potato.) I understood little of the discussions at the meetings of the Northern Virginia Atari User Group (NOVATARI), and the organization's plans to offer short courses for novices never got off the ground. The magazines presented a similar story; although an occasional article tried to walk the newcomer through a particular problem or issue, most were pitched to specialists. David Turner's *Atari ST Book* provided some help, but I remained unable to do more than the basics.

Digging in the Dark

By mid-1988, I had abandoned my explorations of the Dark Continent, and my son had never made it past a few PD and commercial games. I continued writing my book and sometimes played *Phantasie*, *Gauntlet*, or *Defender of the Crown*. When my employer sent me off to Harvard's Kennedy School of Government that fall, I allowed my membership in NOVATARI (and my subscription to *Current Notes*) to lapse. Indeed, during my nine months in Cambridge I began toying with the idea of selling the ST and joining the MS-DOS mainstream by buying an IBM clone.

Trying Again

For reasons that remain obscure, I found myself, on returning to Northern Virginia in June 1989, newly resolved to getting more out of my ST, having discarded the silly notion of moving backwards to IBM. I rejoined NOVATARI and subscribed, not only to *Current Notes* but also to *Start*, and I began reading both magazines as well as Turner's book with close attention. I also discovered *Dungeon Master*, which was reason enough to stick with the ST.

I moved into new territory in October 1989, when I took advantage of the low prices at AtariFest to purchase a Supra 2400-baud modem so I could ask for help from other users. Getting the hang of it, as usual, was an eventful process, but soon I was linked to ARMUDIC, NOVATARI's BBS, having chosen GEM-based *Vanterm* over the CLI-style *Flash*. (By this time, I was able to throw around some of the jargon; I even sent in \$15 to become a registered user of *Vanterm* after learning that "shareware" did not refer to communal eating utensils.)

The modem proved a godsend when I bought an Atari 30-megabyte hard drive in May 1990. ARMUDIC users, I happily discovered, liked giving advice and helping out newcomers. Paul Cartwright, in particular, guided me through the process of partitioning the hard drive, choosing the appropriate utilities, installing the *Universal Item Selector* and *NeoDesk*, and eliminating the bugs.

Even so, frustrations remain. For example, ARMUDIC is afflicted by the same syndrome as the magazines: professional or semiprofessional users converse in arcane language and grapple with complex, advanced problems. Moreover, few users are scrupulous about tagging their messages for specific SIG categories or making them private, even when they are single-word responses or otherwise unintelligible to most other users; as a result, the sheer volume of communications sometimes prompts me (and, I warrant, many other would-be users) to log off without reading any.

Finally, what I most want is the opportunity to sit down at an ST with an experienced user and get a hands-on tutorial. Twice I posted bulletins on ARMUDIC

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DIC in hopes of establishing a user group--with both novices and old hands--in the Alexandria-Arlington area, but only one person expressed interest. Thus, I am still dependent on the BBS, the magazines, and NOVATARI's monthly meetings.

What User Groups Can Do

During the three years I have spent trying to find out how the ST can serve my needs, I have come to understand a simple truth: Computer novices do not think like experienced computer users do. Because the logic of an operating system is fixed, intuition is useless until one understands the system's parameters and principles. Like the old stereotype of the woman who knows nothing about the internal combustion engine other than where to insert the car key, the novice sees the computer as a black box; if standard operating instructions fail to work, the new comer is helpless because the machine's workings remain an enigma. My guess is that those who have mastered the computer do not remember how baffling first encounters can be.

The Poor Man's Mac

Lots of folks will be having first encounters over the next few years, according to *Business Week* (September 10, 1990), which foresees a new cycle of home-computer purchases, led by IBM's PS/1. Despite its disinclination to advertise in the U.S. market, Atari Corp. no doubt will manage to sell some units. *Business Week* mentioned the 1040STe as "the poor man's Mac," by luck and word of mouth. But the intrepid few who somehow stumble into the world of Atari will be fully incorporated into the community only through the actions of experienced Atarians, operating through their user groups.

Here's How We Do It

Recruit

User groups can provide flyers to local Atari dealers, providing details on meetings and benefits as well as telephone numbers for further information. New members should be introduced at meetings, and old members might say hello and offer to help out.

Provide Support

Old hands could volunteer to give advice to newcomers on specific topics, such as word processing, midi, graphics, games, etc. NOVATARI formerly published a list of such volunteers in each issue of *Current Notes*--I appreciated their help when I was getting started--but has allowed the practice to expire. Another way to support new users would be to offer short courses on different subjects or at least to sponsor periodic seminars. Every two months or so, depending on demand, one experienced user could

host a few new ones to a demonstration on his or her machine. Even better, the user group could maintain a list of old hands willing to spend a couple of hours at a new user's machine, answering questions and providing tips. Learning to use a computer requires hands-on experience with guidance, and a few hours of instruction at the keyboard would surpass any other method.

Help via Bulletin Boards

Each BBS could have a "Help" SIG where novices could post requests for advice. If old-timers were conscientious about reading and responding to messages, this would be one of the quickest and least time-consuming ways to assist new users.

Prepare Simple Instructional Materials

A collection of Richard Gunter's "Starting Block" columns from *Current Notes*, for example, could prove indispensable to a novice ST owner. User groups also could ask members to draft introductory articles on topics such as Getting Started, Choosing a Word Processing Program, Attaching a Printer, Adding a Modem, and The Joys of a Hard Disk. The contributions then could be stapled together and distributed to newcomers for a nominal fee. The important point here is: Keep it simple.

Others, no doubt, can come up with additional suggestions. To be sure, adopting such measures will require time and effort by Atarians who no doubt would prefer to be doing their own thing. But unless all the talk about the wonders of Atari machines is just idle chatter, surely a dozen people in each user group would be willing to devote a little energy to a worthy cause. It's time to move from preaching to some serious missionary work. [Publisher's Note: Agreeing with the author, we have taken a first step. A collection of Richard Gunter's "Starting Block" columns is available on *Current Notes*' PD disk #515]



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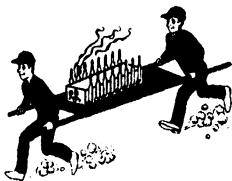
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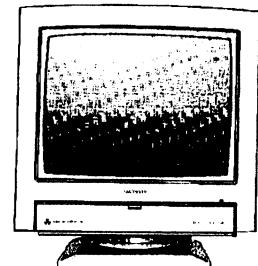
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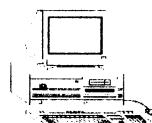


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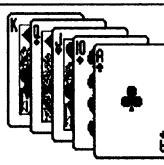
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Hoyle's Book of Games

"not exactly according to"

Review by: Don Elmore



How about a disk full of family card games? No "R" ratings or strip poker, just six of the standard card games. Sierra has one, and calls it *Hoyle's Book of Games*. It includes Crazy Eights, Old Maid, Hearts, Gin Rummy, Cribbage and Klondike (solitaire). I bought the game mostly because of Hearts. I have always enjoyed Hearts and with the advent of PCs, looked forward to being able to play Hearts without having to find two or three willing opponents. I even bought an IBM version to play with my IBM emulator. Now I have the Atari version and I can play Hearts to my heart's content. As usual with anything Sierra puts out, the box art and instruction manual are first rate. *Hoyle* requires at least 512K of memory, a double-sided drive and plays in either low resolution (color) or high resolution.

Slow, Slow, But Slow. Generally speaking, I like the games, but there is one very big downside to Sierra's *Hoyle* for Atari. It is *slow!!* And when I say *slow*, I mean *maddeningly slow*. All of the games could use a touch of "JATO," but since Hearts is my favorite, I will speak to it. When booted off the disk, after the cards have been dealt and the play begins, the critter inside the CPU thinks for ten or more seconds between each play. Even after the Hearts have all fallen, and the Queen of Spades has dropped, on the last card of the last trick ... all the last player had to do was toss in the last card. That took well over five seconds of "thinking" first!

So, I tried installing the program on my hard drive. Still *slow*. If anything, it would shave off only a couple of seconds during each play of a card. I then created a ram disk large enough to hold the program, and played it from there. Guess what? *SLOW!*

Opponents Galore. Now, having said all of the above, do I recommend buying the game? If all you want in card games are gambling games, no. If you want some of the old standards ... if you want to play them with children ... then, yes. There are some cute options worked into the program. With the exception of solitaire, you are offered a choice of 18 different opponents to choose from. They are broken down into two groups, one "Not-So-Serious," and the other "More Serious." The opponents are either fun or challenging. You can play against ruthless card sharks or Sierra's super heros or heroines. Crazy 8's with Leisure Suit Larry, Rosella and Roger Wilco? No problem! Oh, and before you choose your opponents, you choose from nine card designs; rainbows to tropical palm trees.

Good Play Strategies. I found Crazy 8's to be straight forward, and actually managed to win a game or two. Old Maid is not my forte, but I think that the younger players would really like to play it. *Hoyle* provides an animated "Old Maid" card deck for them. Hearts, as previously stated, is (other than Bridge) one of my favorite relax-time card games. I found the opposition to be quite challenging (albeit very *slow*). I have yet to catch any of the opponents trying to run hearts, but I have had them stop me from doing it! The Gin Rummy game is a bit on the simple side. I don't know enough about the algorithms to explain it. I just got the feeling that my opponent was not exactly a rocket scientist. But, it was still enjoyable.

The same can be said for Cribbage. The computer plays a fairly straightforward game of Cribbage, although (as in Hearts) I suspect that my opponent was never a Navy CPO!

Klondike offers some interesting variations. It starts out with you owing 50 points. Each card moved over to the foundation piles (The four Aces) is worth five points, and if you win the game, you get 500 points. Sort of like the money version where you buy a deck for \$52.00 and are paid \$5.00 for each card moved to the foundation piles. You can choose between running through the pack one time, or running the cards one at a time, repeatedly until no more plays are possible. You can also choose flipping the cards three at a time (like many of us do in real play), with the subtle difference that Hoyle turns each of the three cards in the play over one at a time, so you always know which two are under the third (top) card, like you probably do when you actually play solitaire. I usually do.

Lots'a Menu Choices! Now, don't be put off by some of the special menus. Yes, you have a Speed menu and you can choose deal, play and delay speed from 1 to 5 (5 being the fastest). But, 5 is ... *woefully slow!!* You can also turn the sound and the conversations off and on.

What conversations? If you leave that option on, they will tell you a little bit about themselves. And, if (God forbid) you delay in the play of a card, they will chime in and talk about the weather, gossip or life back home. I usually turn them off. But they are there if you want them. They even talk among themselves!

Play and/or Learn. Sierra says that the program teaches as well as plays, but this is one of those games that require little or no study to get into. If you don't remember (or know) how to play the games, there are extensive and detailed rules in the manual, and simplified rules in the help menu included with each game. If you do, you merely boot it and start enjoying it. It is definitely a no-stress game, I enjoy it (in spite of the slowness) and I think you would too.

Rising Star

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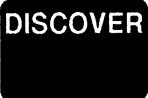
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VISIONS 10 and 15. Variations on a CN program that was also in ANTIC's TECH TIPS. Uses Graphics 10 and 15.

Visions10:

```

5 REM ADAPTED FROM CN: VISIONS 2/87?
10 GRAPHICS 10:Z=1:W=3.14159:X=2
11 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):K=PEEK(87)
15 POKE DL+3,71:POKE DL+6,12:GOSUB 120
20 FOR C=704 TO 712:READ N:POKE C,N:NEXT C
30 FOR I=1 TO 79
40 Z=Z+RND(0)/3:IF Z>9 THEN Z=0
50 COLOR Z
60 PLOT I,X:DRAWTO 79-I,X
70 PLOT I,190-X:DRAWTO 79-I,190-X
80 X=X+W:IF X>190 THEN X=2
82 S=STICK(0)
83 IF S<>15 THEN 82
84 IF STRIC(0)=0 THEN PUT #6,125:GOSUB 120
90 NEXT I:Z=Z+0.3:GOTO 30
100 DATA 2,68,52,182,148,164,28,84,12
120 POKE 87,0:POSITION 1,0? "v i s i o n s "
130 POKE 87,K:RETURN

```

Visions15:

```

5 REM ADAPTED FROM CN: VISIONS 2/87?
10 GRAPHICS 31:Z=1:W=2.33:Y=2
11 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):K=PEEK(87)
15 POKE DL+3,71:POKE DL+6,12:GOSUB 120
20 FOR C=708 TO 712:READ N:POKE C,N:NEXT C
30 FOR I=1 TO 158 STEP INT(RND(0)*6)+1
40 Z=Z+0.12:IF Z>3 THEN Z=0.2
50 COLOR Z
60 PLOT I,Y:DRAWTO 158-I,Y
70 PLOT I,189-Y:DRAWTO 158-I,189-Y
80 Y=Y+W:IF Y>187 THEN Y=INT(RND(0)*20)+2
82 S=STICK(0)
83 IF S<>15 THEN 82
84 IF STRIC(0)=0 THEN PUT #6,125:GOSUB 120
90 NEXT I:Z=Z+0.3:GOTO 30
100 DATA 232,66,132,4,0

```

```

120 POKE 87,0:POSITION 1,0? "V I S I O N S "
130 POKE 87,K:RETURN

```

Starwebs:

Originally little more than an Apple hi-res algorithm, a one-liner in an Apple magazine--A+ I think. Years later a very similar program was published by ANTIC in GFA Basic for the ST. Small variations in certain parameters can change the shapes quite a bit.

```

10 GRAPHICS 31:COLOR 1:SETCOLOR 4,0,0
20 L=80:SETCOLOR 0,8,4:SETCOLOR 1,14,6:SETCOLOR 2,4,4:SETCOLOR 3,5,4
30 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561)
40 POKE DL+3,71:POKE DL+6,6:K=PEEK(87)
50 POKE 87,2? "#6;"=//=star==webs=\\= //PRESS
51 START//":POKE 87,K
60 FOR J=4 TO 50+RND(0)*50 STEP
INT(RND(0)*6)+4:L=L-(RND(0)>0.5)*(L-
INT(RND(0)*120)):K=159-L:COLOR INT(RND(0)*3+1)
70 K=ABS(K):K=K+(K=0):IF L>159 THEN L=159
80 PLOT J,80:DRAWTO K,K:DRAWTO 80,J:DRAWTO
L,K:DRAWTO 159-J,80:DRAWTO L,L:DRAWTO
80,159-J:DRAWTO K,L:DRAWTO J,80
90 NEXT J
100 SOUND 0,RND(0)*10+65,12,RND(0)*12
110 FOR W=1 TO 9+RND(0)*6:NEXT W:SOUND 0,0,0
120 IF PEEK(53279)<>6 AND STRIG(0) THEN 100
130 GOTO 10

```

Stargate

Also an APPLE program for drawing circles. Probably from Creative Computing. I just took the algorithm, changed sizes and colors, and started cycling. As the colors shift, some artifacting causes white sparkles--hence the name.

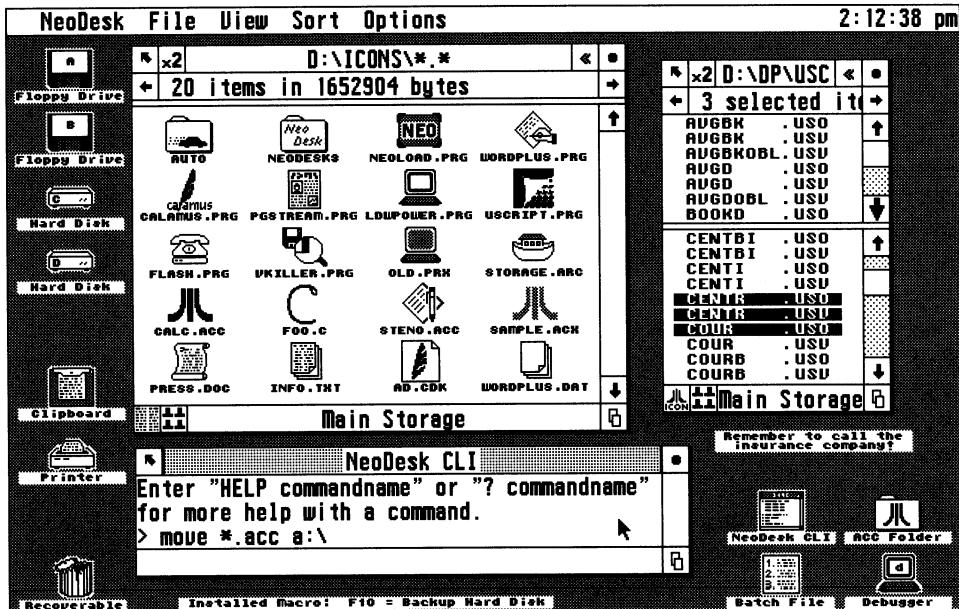
```

5 DIM X(30),Y(30):C=1:HH=68:VV=40
10 GRAPHICS 7+16:SETCOLOR 0,4,2:SETCOLOR
1,14,6:SETCOLOR 2,8,0:SETCOLOR 4,0,0:SETCOLOR 3,0,6
11 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):POKE DL+3,71:POKE
DL+6,6:K=PEEK(87):POKE 87,2
12 ? "#6;" STARGATE* ****
13 POKE 87,K
15 COLOR C:IF C>3 THEN 120
20 N=18-C*4:PI=6.28318/N
50 FOR I=0 TO N-1:Z=PI*I:X(I)=COS(Z)*(HH-
C*4)+80:Y(I)=SIN(Z)*(VV-C*5)+48:NEXT I
100 FOR I=0 TO N-1:FOR M=I TO N-1:PLOT
X(I),Y(I):DRAWTO X(M),Y(M):NEXT M:NEXT I:FOR T=1
TO 100:NEXT T:C=C+1
110 GOTO 15
120 TEMP=PEEK(708):POKE 708,PEEK(709):POKE
709,PEEK(710):POKE 710,TEMP
130 FOR X=1 TO 30:NEXT X:GOTO 120

```

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From low resolution to ultra high resolution, NeoDesk 3 supports up to 10 different resolutions in each system.

Of course, these features would not be useful unless they were easy to use. Rest assured, NeoDesk 3 has been designed to be "upwardly compatible". Use NeoDesk just like you used the original desktop, no need to forget all that you have learned.

It doesn't stop there. The included *Recoverable Trashcan* lets you recover files deleted with it at any time in the future. It was created using the *NeoDesk Developer's Kit*, which opens a whole new world of possibilities. There's also the *NeoDesk CLI* (both available separately), a complete window based command line interpreter which allows you to create pop-up menus, automate file operations, and much more.

No matter who you are, NeoDesk 3 has something for you. From helpful search capabilities to a powerful file reorder function. Thanks to its ability to remove itself from memory, it only needs about 35K of memory. Of course, there's lots more, which you can discover by ordering today!

NeoDesk 3 and the NeoDesk CLI are available from your local dealer, or order toll free by calling (800) 284-GRIB and get FREE 2nd Day Air (US only). Call or write for upgrade and other information.

GRIBNIF SOFTWARE

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Stuck in a Rut

by Sam Wright



The Hound of Shadow

Oh, no. Not another seance. Being a psychic investigator who dabbles in the occult as well, I hardly have enough time to work on my own paranormal theories, much less other people's psychic claims. But to gain the respect of the scientific community, I must continue to discredit these imposters. Which means more seances. Ugh. Well, at least I'll get a free trip to London. Harriet will be there, too. Haven't seen her in years. And what if there is indeed something to this Adept Karmi? What if indeed?

In 1928, Weird Tales published H.P. Lovecraft's short story, "The Call of Cthulhu," which would soon be the basis for a series of "Cthulhu Mythos" tales. The central theme of the Cthulhu Mythos revolves around the belief that humankind is not alone in the world. Keeping us in constant company are horrific, demonic creatures that we're totally unaware of (cf. the movie *Ghostbusters* for a recent parodic example).

Eldritch Games Limited drew from Lovecraft's invented myth and created *The Hound of Shadow*, an original Cthulhu Mythos story. Basing it on their Timeline computer role-playing system, *Hound* gives you the opportunity to explore and "enter the sinister world of H.P. Lovecraft."

According to *Hound*'s introduction, "you become involved with murder, revenge, the occult, demonic possession, and other horrors that should have died a very long time ago. You will discover many of the awful things that lurk behind a seemingly humdrum existence and learn through bitter experience that ignorance really can be bliss." While this would make for a great adventure game by anyone's standards, it sets too high an expectation and ultimately leads to disappointment.

Hound does succeed in delivering an involving storyline, particularly with the way historical fact is woven into mythology. The descriptions of some of the scenes (Matthew Talbot's memorable flies, for example) are especially well-written and engaging without being too graphic (the descriptive prose is decidedly toned down by Lovecraft standards). The characters,

much as Lovecraft's, are one-dimensional. I hardly felt anything or cared for anyone, even Harriet, my best friend. Characters are not usually the strength of horror stories; what drives most stories in this genre is plot. Pure plot. And that's something *Hound* does have. Unfortunately, when you're a character in the story, that's not much.

In fact, *Hound* doesn't play like a standard adventure game. On the surface it looks like a text adventure with occasional static graphics (in faded brown to simulate the look of old photographs), but underneath you're hardly in control of your character. While there are multiple ways of arriving at the different conclusions, I hardly had to think of anything; I simply obeyed what the characters told me to do. Sure, you don't have to follow what they say, but sometimes you have no choice. About halfway into the game, Harriet and Mr. Marcus, the owner of my favorite bookstore, decided to search my flat complex. They did the downstairs and suggested I search the upstairs. I wanted to explore the train stations or even catch up on some reading in the reading room, but I couldn't. The already severely limited parser kept returning, "I don't understand that" or "I beg your pardon." When trying to go someplace, the parser told me I should specify where I wanted to search.

Little things like these start to build up. Before this incident, I was in the museum's reading room. I wanted to go home to take a nap, but couldn't. The parser wouldn't recognize "go home," when it had all the other times I had entered it. Instead, it said, "I don't understand that."

Despite the amount of time I put into my character development under the Timeline system (more on that in a moment), I didn't feel as if I knew myself. I seemed to be just another character in the game, devoid of free will.

Hound has events that are going to happen with you to witness them whether you want to or not. You can end the game in one of several ways, but they don't seem contrived on your part, just the natural progression of the game and what you've found out from talking with characters and library research.

Because of this, creating hints for *Hound* was practically impossible. There aren't many objects in the game (the things of use exist outside the room's description). This goes against other adventures and forces you to assume things are where they should be, such as matches in the kitchen or spare change in your pockets), and there aren't many situations where you have full control. Essentially, *Hound* is a straight story with you there to turn the next page. As such, it's not scary (Infocom's *The Lurking Horror*, inspired by the styles of Lovecraft and Stephen King, did a much better job of that), but it's an enjoyable tale of the paranormal. As an adventure game, though, I can't recommend it, save for one thing: Timeline.

Eldritch's Timeline is the best thing about the game. Timeline is what makes *Hound*'s text adventure look like so much more. A comprehensive character generator, you pick out your characteristics from pictorial icons using the mouse (which seems strange since the actual game is straight text and commands are only through the keyboard). Character traits begin with the common (sex, name, and birthdate), then branch off to what you do for a living ranging from a novelist to a reporter to a private eye. Once you select your profession, you're presented with numerous skills, some pre-determined by what profession you chose. Skills break up into seven categories: physical (climbing, driving, handling a gun), social (haggling, bluffing, persuading, speaking a language), investigative (backgrounds in history, research, linguistics, psychology), academic (knowledge of archaeology, natural history, languages), logical (knowledge of anthropology, chemistry, law, medicine), creative (ability to hide, navigate, shoot a picture), and spiritual. These examples are by no means exhaustive; there are many more different skills within each of these categories. Skills are manipulatable in strength and actually do affect the game itself. Sometimes replaying the game as a different character is *Hound*'s most enjoyable quality.

My character is Samantha Wright (since it's a role-playing game, why not? Some professions were closed to me because of my sex, as they were in 1925). After choosing all my traits, Timeline summarized my character as being of "average build, healthy, strong willed, well-coordinated, attractive, tall, intelligent, and well-educated." I'm also an "accomplished scholar of classical Greek," which enabled me to easily translate some of the texts I found in the library. My description continues: "You are a proficient linguist, are familiar with astrological theories, can quickly and thoroughly research a subject, are not a good person to pick a fight with, and are well-informed on historical matters. You are acquainted with occult beliefs and practices."

What's more, when I finished *Hound*, my knowledge and experiences grew. I can now use my character in another Timeline adventure game.

Understandably, if your character dies, that's it. No restoring previous saved games or restarting to bring you back to life. You have to create another character. Likewise, once you finish *Hound*, you can't play it again with the same character.

You'll still be able to finish the game with any character you create, though. With *Hound*, three ready-made characters are also available.

I'm still not a fan of role-playing games, but if Timeline is any indication of where they're headed (or rather, where text adventures are headed), I won't mind them at all. Just as long as nothing else is sacrificed, like *Hound*'s parser.

The Hound of Shadow (\$39.95) from Electronic Arts/Eldritch Games Limited runs on all color Atari STs and comes on three single-sided disks. It is copy protected by documentation (three times you will need to look up easy-to-find numbers in the instruction manual) and can effortlessly be run from a hard drive, taking up less than 1 megabyte. Saved games clock in at 43K each and are saved as individual files.

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**Shareware
Sampler
by
Brian
Miller**

The Mail Bag

I would like to begin this month's column by acknowledging two thank you letters I recently received.

TestMaster. Mr. William Shipley, author of *TestMaster* thanked me for telling you about his shareware program, Library disk #495, in the October issue of *Current Notes*. If you haven't tried this program yet, tsk! tsk! tsk! Come on, it's getting later in the school year, and this program could really help bolster your grades.

I was unaware that you could abort the program before completing a test. Mr. Shipley points out in his letter that this is done by pressing the [ESC] key when the "CORRECT" or "INCORRECT" message is displayed after selecting an answer. This information is included in the documentation. (I should have used *TestMaster* to measure my comprehension of Bill's well written instructions).

TestMaster is worth every penny of its \$10.00 registration fee. Send kudos and fees to:

William Shipley, 798 Blenheim Ct.
Severna Park, Md. 21146.

Guitaristics. Jim Collins and Skip LaGrange wrote to thank me for reviewing *Guitaristics*. The authors sent me some biographical information, and guess what? They promise to send me a demo version of their *Pianistics* program. I can hardly wait. I am already up to page 53 of Alfred's Basic Keyboard Course, only a page away from "Kum-Ba-Yah." My fingers are itching to give *Pianistics* a workout.

If Jim and Skip's program can outdo the Alfred's primer, maybe I can learn piano without having to practice schmaltzy folk songs and Polkas I wouldn't want to perform anyway. I hope the guys hurry, because the "Hokey-Pokey" is on page 63, only ten more pages to go. This was my ex-wife's favorite ditty, so for personal reasons I hope I can put Alfred aside before then.

Jim and Skip have given me the low down on what it is like to be an independent developer. That road is paved in anything but gold. I hope aspiring Segovias and Van Halens will help them stay in business by purchasing their product, by contacting:

Chro-Magic Software, 516 N. Jackson,
Joplin, Mo (417)782-2364.

**Me First! No, Me First! Me First,
or Else You're Dead Meat! D--A--D!!**

Most parents will recognize this incessant banter as the familiar dialogue of yet another sibling squabble. After a Saturday morning of threats, arguments, and occasional fisticuffs, I'm tempted to abdicate the title of Dad, in favor of Biff, Bob, or President. Any mantle which carries less responsibility than father would be preferable to having to break up another fight between my two youngsters.

Recently, however, hearing *Me First* does not necessarily send my blood pressure racing to the dangerous stroke zone. *Me First* is also the title of Current Notes disk #476. The disk contains a series of learning games and stories for children.

The *Me First* shareware program was written by: Ken Kressin, The Knowledge Vine, 500 4th Ave. S.E., Waseca, MN 56093. Phone: (507) 835-7959 BBS (24hr): (507) 835-2272

Mr. Kressin used GFA Basic, Version 3 and Cyber Paint to create this innovative program. The registration fee is a mere \$5.00. *Me First* is easy enough for very young pre-schoolers to learn. Older children may enjoy their ability to master the games with nary an error. I know I did.

Me First presents four colorful pictures set in a row at the top of the computer screen. The pictures are out of sequence, and the challenge is to arrange them in logical order, to tell a story. By clicking the selected picture with the mouse cursor, it will move to the bottom row. If, after all four paintings have been chosen, the sequence is wrong, then the pictures will automatically return to the top row. On the second attempt, the program moves the correct choice for the first picture to the bottom row, to serve as a guide for the remaining three. Once all four of the colorful paintings have been correctly arranged, the story is animated, complete with musical background. The pictures can be doubled in size by pressing both mouse buttons.

After one set of pictures has been correctly arranged the child can go on to the next set. A total of six six sets are included. *Me First* includes additional data sets to guarantee your child hours of enjoyment. As a learning aid the program excels since it helps teach the very important skill of logically sequencing events.

Mr. Kressin states that his goal was to create a challenging and entertaining learning environment without causing frustration for the child. He amply succeeds in this endeavor.

As always if you know of a deserving example of shareware or Public Domain software which you feel deserves attention, send it to:

Brian Miller, 13848 Delaney Road,
Woodbridge, VA 22193.

NOVATARI

XL/XE PD Library

Applications

APP1 – Textpro 4.0 (Latest text editor for the Atari. Works with Mydos 4.50)

Demo Disks

- DMO1 – Classic 8-bit Demos (A collection of 7 demos from the early days of Atari.)
- DMO2 – 8-bit Graphics Demos (4 of the more recent 8-bit demos.)
- DMO3 – Video Blitz (130XE Required) (One of best 8-bit demos ever released.)
- DMO4 – German Sound and Graphics (An excellent art and music demo.)

Disk Operating System

- DOS1 – DOS 2.5 (An old DOS standby.)
- DOS2 – Rainbow DOS (An interesting graphics dos.)
- DOS3 – Desktop DOS (A demo of an ST-type desktop for the 8-bit.)
- DOS4 – DOS 4.0 (Never officially released by Atari.)
- DOS5 – DOS 2.6 (Similar to DOS 2.5)
- DOS6 – MachDOS 3.7a (An Atari DOS alternative.)
- DOS7 – Mydos 4.50 (One of the best Atari DOS substitutes.)
- DOS8 – DOS XE (The DOS released by Atari to provide support for the XF551 drive.)

Game Disks

- GAM1 – Text Adventures (Secret Agent, Survival, Kidnapped, Adventure in the Fifth Dimension)
- GAM2 – Space Games II (Outpost, Microids, Blockade, Nukewar, TrekST, Maniac Maze, Space Fort)
- GAM3 – Machine Language Games (Fifteen fast 100% M/L games)

Graphics

- GRA1 – Video 130XE version 2.10 (Req a 130XE. An image acquisition and processing system. Requires Computereyes to acquire images.)
- GRA2 – Video 130XE Images (4 images for use with the Video 130XE program.)
- GRA3 – More Video 130XE Images
- GRA4 – GIF 2.0 (view high resolution color pictures in the Graphic Interchange Format (.GIF).)
- GRA5 – GIF Pictures (Several pictures for use with the GIF Viewer above.)
- GRA6 – DRAW 7 (130XE Required. Excellent drawing program that includes animation capability.)

Utilities

- UTL1 – Screens (An impressive windowing utility.)
- UTL2 – Help Key Routine (Include the HELP key in your own programs.)
- UTL3 – ARC/ALF Utilities (Several file compression and decompression utilities.)

Disks are **\$3 each** with \$1 shipping per 3 disks. Send all orders to: Geoff DiMego, 8612 Thames Street, Springfield, VA 22151.

Northern Virginia Atari Users' Group

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ARMUDIC Sysop..	Scott Ogden.....	703-450-3992

Meetings. NOVATARI meets on the 2nd Sunday of each month starting at 6:00 pm at the Washington Gas Light Building, 6801 Industrial Road, Springfield, VA. Take 495 to east on Braddock Rd (620) to south on Backlick Rd (617). Left on Industrial Road. Washington Gas Light is the second building on the right.

New Members. Dues are \$26/year/family and include a subscription to *Current Notes*. Join at the meeting or by sending \$26, payable to NOVATARI, to NOVATARI, P.O. Box 4076, Merrifield, VA 22116.

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Access to the NOVATARI BBS requires a fee in addition to dues. This fee is \$8 per year for NOVATARI members and \$12 per year for members of other user groups. Make checks payable to "NOVATARI" and send to: NOVATARI, P.O. Box 4076, Merrifield, VA 22116.

Current Notes ST Library

July-August 1990

#460D: DYNACADD DEMO-(M) V1.76. CADD package, (no SAVE or EXPORT) comes with font editor program and several utilities. Req 1MB, DS, mono.

#461: CALAMUS OUTLINE ART DEMO-(M) Working demo (no SAVE) to this companion program to Calamus. Req 1MB, DS, mono.

#462: BLOODWYCH DEMO-(C) Fully-playable "Dungeon Master" game by Mirrorsoft includes split-screen for two-player simultaneous action.

#463: BLOOD MONEY DEMO and WIPEOUT-(C) BLOOD MONEY, horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em up. WIPEOUT demo, Intergalactic Hoverboard Challenge. FONE VOICE, create crazy messages for your telephone answering machine. SPINNING BOXES animation.

#464: PERSONAL FINANCE-Payroll, (V3.0, complete payroll operations, quarterly reports, printing paychecks, up to 200 employees). Cost of Living Adjuster, Checkbook V1.14, and Personal Finance Manager demo.

#465D: MAIL PRO & STOCKS AND BONDS-(M) Mail Pro Demo: filing and mail-merge system, demo ver offers limited entries. Req 1MB. Stocks and Bonds is a game based on the fast action stock market game.

#466: 16-VOICE SEQUENCER-- features multi-voice recording, split keyboards and/or velocity ranges, simple editing using mouse and MIDI keyboard.

#467: MIDI MUSIC MAKER-music player fordo, Music Studio 88, Music Construction Set, EZ-Track, Standard MIDI Files, Sid Player Music, Master Composer, Advanced Music System, MIDI Music System, Orchestra 85/90, Lyra 1 and 2.

#468: CALAMUS FONTS #3-Advertising, Barnum, Casual, Celtic, Chrome, Flash, Harloe, Mouse, Schoolbook, Western. Includes Atari, MasterCard and VISA logos in CFN format.

#469: PAGESTREAM FONT EDITOR--The official font editor from Soft-Logik.

#470: CLIP ART #14--People, all types of people in a variety of everyday situations, captured in Degas format.

#471: CLIP ART #15--More People in Degas format pics. DSLIDE viewing program included.

#472: INSTANT GRAPHICS! V2.14--communicate over modem in color, sound, and motion. For use with terminal programs that allow the use of Desk Accessories.

#473: INSTANT GRAPHICS! UTILITIES--editing and graphics creation utility, in-depth tutorial, and utility to convert Music Studio files to IG format for playing MIDI songs over your modem.

#474: MINITERM and MINIBBS--Two Swiss terminal programs. Miniterm is a full-featured desk accessory. Minibbs, a fully operational BBS with up/download, chat mode, and message bases.

#475: HYPERSCREEN and STDCAT V4.3--Hyperscreen, implementation of the Hypertext concept on the ST. STDCAT, disk cataloger program, includes full text search on disk volume or program name, comment.

#476: ME FIRST-(C) V2.0. Interactive learning games/stories for children. Includes documentation and additional DATA files for extended play.

#477: CLASS and EZ-GRADE--CLASS V2.05, combination database and spreadsheet for teachers. EZ-Grade, demo of a commercial gradebook program from Integral Software.

#478: SPACEWARS-(C) Version 1.0, new outer space shoot-em up game.

#479: HERO IID--DEMO of HERO II gaming system incl Dungeon Construction Set to create and manipulate dungeons for the HERO II game system.

September 1990

#480D: CURRENT NOTES CATALOG--catalog of the 500+ disks in the CN ST Library.

#481D: CN MACINTOSH COLLECTION--complete text of the Magic Sac/Spectre columns published in CN from 3/87 - 7/90.

#482D: WALLACE NO.1--Cyber Animations: Dr.Who and Who-K9. 6 NEO pics (cigs, dalek, floppy, paper, whobox4, whobox5)

#483D: WALLACE NO.2--Cyber Animation: Albatros. 6 NEO pics(alarm, diner, kitten, marquee,

ssmonu, title2). 5 PI1 pics(choco-lat, express, house, shawl, unionst1).

#484D: WALLACE NO.3--Cyber Animations: Mad_Max and Megafugi. Marsch.spc, animate4.prg, and spslide.prg.

#485: ALGEBRA I: Linear Equations--tutorial program leading the user into correct equation solving techniques from basic properties through fractional equation solving.

#486: ALGEBRA I: Verbal Problems--Covers 10 of the most common type verbal problems found in Algebra I text-books.

#487: BASIC MATH SKILLS: Operations--pick adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, or a mixture of all four. Includes choice of one of two different arcade type learning games.

#488: GIST (Grades, Interims, Student Teams)--grades management program for teachers.

#489: DO NOT STAMP UTILITIES--Area Code Locator, find the AC (and current time) of any city; Postal.prg, state abbreviations and spellings; SHREDR V1.1, permanently shred data from your disk; Hot!Stat V1.1, analyze ledger files created by HotWire.

#490: THE VIRUS DISK--The Virus Killer, Ver 3.11, detect and eliminate viruses from your disks; Hospital, set of anti-virus utilities; Super Virus Killer; Flu, displays symptoms of viral infections.

#491: WILD FLOWERS--16 stunning pictures of Wisconsin wild flowers in PC1 format (Black-eye, Bloodrt, Fleabane, Forgetme, Goldrod, Hawkweed, Hepatica, Indpipe, Paintbru, Prklypar, Silverwd, Smallow, Spiderwt, Thistle, Trillium, and Wildrose).

#492: UTILITY NO.44--Fast Copy III! (program and accessory); HyperFormat, format 927K on 83-track DS disk. ARC Ver 6.02, latest version of ARC compression utility, runs roughly twice as fast as earlier Ver 5.21.

#493D: B/STAT--Version 2.36 of B/STAT, sophisticated graphing and statistical analysis program. Req 1 MB, DS.

#494: TAIPAN II/GFA SHELL PLUS--Taipan II, V1.1: early 1800s trade as you engage in combat with enemy ships.(C) GFA

Shell Plus: replacement for the GFA Menux program.

October 1990

#495: TESTMASTER.Ver 2.01, Shareware by Bill Shipley, color or mono. Use to set up your own tests to help prepare for exams. Data for a variety of general subjects (like States and Capitals) are included on the disk.

#496D: GUITARIST DEMO.from chro_MAGIC Software Innovations, a tool to help guitarists learn chords and scales in all keys and all positions of the fretboard, give insight into the concepts of scale improvisation and chord substitution, and help develop technical mastery of scales and arpeggios.

#497D: PUBLIC PAINTER V0.1 (Mono) Latest version of this popular paint program from Germany. Includes documentation in English.

#498D: EQUINOX SOUNDTRACKER Soundtracker (V2.5) Playroutine by CHECKSUM. Includes five songs: tar concert in air, dns, demons soundtrack, rise up, and wild.

#499: STARBLADE DEMO-(C) Starblade is a space-opera set in the 30th Century in the vastness of the Orion galaxy. Terrific graphics as you explore your ship. The demo version does not allow you to access the planets.

#500: YOLANDA and RICK DANGEROUS. (C) Demos. Yolanda is an arcade/adventure game. Rick Dangerous, part-time explorer and stamp collector, captured by the Goolu tribe, must escape.

#501: PHOTON STORM-(C) Playable demo version of this fast-paced space arcade game.

#502: GLOVES/FUTURE(C) Playable demo versions of two new arcade games: Kid Gloves and Back to the Future.

#503: NEODESK 3 AND CLI DEMOS.Freeware demo version of NeoDesk 3, a complete replacement for the built-in desktop that comes with the Atari. NeoDesk CLI is a complete window-based command line interpreter. It hooks into NeoDesk itself, taking advantage of its many features and capabilities. It can be used to create powerful

batch files, pop-up menus, and much more.

#504: KID GAMES. (C)

KV_MATCH, Flip over squares to match baby and parent animals. LET-HUNT, learn alphabet by matching letters on the screen. ENCH_FOR, Enchanted Forest, a variant of both 'Shutes and Ladders' and 'Candyland' suitable for children 3 and above. KV_GEO-1, Hypertext geography, learn about the solar system. Shareware.

#505D: TALESPIIN ADVENTURES. (C)

Three adventures created by elementary school children with Talespin, the Adventure Game Creator. SDI, Mansion, and Mountain. SDI.TAL was created by 10 children in the 2nd-5th grades, MOUNTAIN.TAL was designed by 8 3rd-5th graders, each child was responsible for one or more "rooms" in a group-planned scenario.

#506: UTILITY NO. 45. TLC-

Play, play any digitized sound fmt file; TLC-namr, add symbols to any file's name; tlc-form, format a disk to read/write FAST!; tlc-attr, change any file's attributes; mouse_db, new mouse doubler V3; spirited, text ed desk acc; a1-time, time & date setter; clock_5, all rez clock acc; maccel3, Atari Mouse Accelerator 3; ocularax, hard disk password protection; idle_22, idle screen saver; unlzh172, fastest extract for LZH archives; volume, rename disk volume; ST Sentry V5.1.

#507: TADS. Text Adventure Development System. Disk includes Ditch Day Drifter adventure game.

#508: DEEP SPACE DRIFTER. A Text adventure game created with TADS.

#509D: GENIE FILES 9/90.

Archive of files found in the 31 GENie libraries as of Sep 1, 1990. Files also listed in numerical order from 10000 through 16500.

November 1990

#510D: BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEMS. Disk includes two shareware bulletin board systems: Nite Lite BBS and Vulcan Embassy BBS

#511: MIDI MUSIC DISK. Midi-Mike Version 1.0, Music Studio Song Player 1.2, and MSPlayer by Walter Holding. Songs include Mandolin Rain, The Way It Is, Shone On You Crazy Diamond, Higher Love, Satin Doll, and Take Five.

#512: SORRY & ST SQUARE.

(C) Two games for your ST. Sorry is the same as the popular board game of the same name. ST Squares is based on the Hollywood Squares game show. A 2-player game for both adults and young adults.

#513: DISENCHANTED. An interactive fantasy created by Joseph Licairi with the Adventure Game Toolkit.

#514: PILEUP V3.0. (C) In the latest version of this Tetris clone, keyboard control has been added, much improved block control, and a speed option for your joystick. This version completely compatible with TOS 1.4.

December 1990

#515D: STARTING BLOCK. A collection of columns by Richard Gunter directed at the novice just starting out with his computer. Includes reader program that allows searching by word.

#516: STARGATE V3.0. AN excellent program that will let you look out of a spaceship and see the stars around your location. An original idea for Astrology programs.

#517D: ALADDIN. GENie Atari ST Aladdin by Timothy Purves, an automatic communications tool designed to provide you with the most efficient use of the features and services of GENie Information services. Incl. 92-page manual.

#518: UNION DEMO. One of the most spectacular demos for the ST showing off many of the animation and sound capabilities of the ST. This disk can only be duplicated by the duplication utility included within the program. Can be read on SS drive, but requires DS to copy and to see complete demo. (C)

#519D: PRINTER UTILITIES.

Andrzej Wrotniak's AW-Print, a generic printer utility that lets you easily define the characteristics of any printer and send codes via handy GEM drop-down menus.

Also includes two 24-pin printer screen dump utilities (SCDMP1_5 and SCRDM24), and specific printer setup utilities for the Panasonic KX-P1091i (PANASET), the STAR NB 24-10, (STARNB24), and Gemini 10x (GEMINI). Most of these will also work with any Epson compatible printer.

#520D: AIR WARRIOR, V2.0B. Latest update to this air simulation game. Game can be

played in isolation to practice, but is designed for interactive combat on GENie.

#521D: CLIP ART NO. 16. "Old Cars," 28 IMG files of a variety of antique cars.

#522D: CLIP ART NO. 17. "Cartoons," 55 IMG files. 10 pictures of Garfield, 13 Smurf pics, and 32 other cartoon characters.



TNA

#523D: CLIP ART NO. 18.

"Misc Themes," 49 IMG files: 6 Egyptian pictures, 29 Music pictures, and 14 Zodiac pics.

#524D: CLIP ART NO. 19.

"High Res Pictures," a collection of 24 fine art pictures in an IMG clip-art format.



#525D: GRAN PRIX. An auto racing arcade game with dozens of various courses. (C)

#526D: eSTeem PILOT Demo

(1.0). A demo of this excellent implementation of PILOT, the classic, educational authoring language, richly enhanced by GEM, for creating and using tutorials, computer-based instruction, and laser videodisc training. Can be run on color, but works best on monochrome systems.

#527D: NAME THAT TUNE &

ALCHIMIE. Alchimie Jr is a

music sequencer from France for use with MIDI. Name That Tune is a fun little game that lets you match your skills with an opponent to see who is better at recognizing songs. Use with either or both of the song data disks listed below.

#528: NAME THAT TUNE

MISC SONGS. 111 songs for use with the "Name That Tune" game on #527. All kinds of songs are on this disk.

#529D: NAME THAT TUNE

TV SONGS. 111 themes from various TV shows. Use with CN #527 for a fun and exciting Name That Tune contest.

#530: CINEMA & FLASH-

CARD. Here are two educational programs. Cinema is a shareware program for young kids and it allows them to run and create simple animation sequences. Flashcards is just like the name suggests. The author used it to help learn a foreign language.

#531: UTILITY NO. 46. Here

are three excellent programs. Quick ST 2.2 Demo--once you try speeding up your ST with Darek Mihocha's utility, you won't be able to resist buying it! Little Green Selector V1.88--newest version of this alternative file selector routine. The Gram Slam Grammar Checker Demo--at last, what many Atarians have been looking for, a way to check their grammar!

#532: MANIAC MINER & VAL-

GUS. (C) Two good arcade type games. Maniac Miner lets you go exploring looking for underground treasures but watching out for rockslides and other obstacles. Valgus V2.0 is a two-player version of a Tetris-clone game. If you liked Tetris, you'll love competing against an opponent in Valgus.

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Order disks from CN Library, 122 N. Johnson Rd, Sterling, VA 22170. VISA and MasterCard orders are welcome (703) 450-4761.

ATARI Industry Announcements:

Michtron Goes East

(NEWARK, DE. 13 Nov 1990.) Michtron's operation has been purchased by a software group from Newark, Delaware. The new president, James A. Dorsman, has taken over full operation of all technical support, development, and publishing. Gordon Monnier, former president of Michtron, will be consulting with the new firm to help make the transition as smooth as possible.

Michtron's existing product line will continue to be sold and serviced with the usual expertise. Michtron intends to continue distributing and servicing for the overseas publishers it has worked with in the past, and to seek out new products from home as well as abroad.

For more information, or to be included on Michtron's mailing list, please call or write to: Michtron, Inc., 3201 Drummond Plaza, Newark, DE 19711 1-302-454-7946 (FAX: 1-302-454-1403).

New Super Charger Released

(LAS VEGAS, NE. 12 Oct 1990.) RIO Computers has released Ver. 1.4 of the Super

Charger IBM emulator software. The new software allows any ST to parallel multi-task/multi-process TOS and DOS. The Super Charger is accessed as a desk accessory and can be returned to TOS with a "hot key" command without rebooting. The one meg of memory supplied with Super Charger can also be used as a RAM disk in the TOS mode if it is not being used in the DOS mode.

RIO will also be releasing three optional add-on boards that change Super Charger into a full co-computer rather than simply an emulator. These optional boards will simply plug into the existing Super Charger, with no soldering required. Price is yet to be announced on any of the three boards.

SCplus NET. A full networking board that will allow both DOS and TOS programs and/or files to be connected in Network systems under Novell, etc. at transfer rates of 2.5 Mbit/sec. The board mounts into the existing Super Charger case and connects into the Super Charger expansion bus. Available December 1990.

SCplus/286 (SCplus/386sx). These upgrades turn Super Charger into a full 286 (386) co-computer. Like the original, the 286 (386) processor runs at 12 MHz (16 MHz) on a pure AT chip set. It comes standard with

1.0 meg of RAM and is expandable to 2.0 or 4.0 MB all fully EMS supported. SCplus/286 contains true AT expansion slots that will accept any PC-AT expansion cards such as VGA, FAX boards and interface boards. There is also provision for an optional 80286 (80386) co-processor. The boards plug into the existing Super Charger's V30 socket, with no solder required. Available January 1991 (February 1991).

Migraph Lowers Scanner Price

(FEDERAL WAY, WA, 21 Sep. 1990)

Migraph announced a \$100 reduction in the list price of their Touch-Up/Hand Scanner bundle bringing the price to \$399. Migraph also announced Atari User Groups can purchase a single Hand Scanner and Touch-Up software bundle at a user group price of \$250, \$149 off the list price. To qualify for the special price, the president of the user group must write a letter to Migraph on the User Group's letterhead, requesting the "User Group Atari ST Bundle." Payment of \$250 by check, money order, Visa, or Mastercard (with expiration date noted) must accompany the letter. Migraph, Inc., 200 South 333rd St, #200, Federal Way, WA 98003. 1-206-838-4677 (FAX: 1-206-838-4702).

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Group #2

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Kiddos

Gaudy Condensed

HoBow

Legendary

Terragone

SOLEMN

Group #7

Cursive

Old English

WindyCity

Old English Condensed

Trumpet

Rhiner Script

GILL KO

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CURRENT NOTES

SPECTRE LIBRARY

These disks are for use with the Spectre Macintosh emulator for the Atari ST/Mega computers. All disks are in Spectre format. Unless otherwise noted, these disks do not work with the Magic Sac Macintosh emulator. A 'D' following a disk number indicates a double-sided disk. Disks are listed in the order in which they were introduced by Current Notes. Note that you need a Mac System/Finder disk to use any of the Magic or Spectre disks.

#S01: MacWrite 5.0 Demo--(Cannot print/save but can load and read doc files.)

#S02: MacPaint 2.0 Demo--(Cannot print/save files but can load, view & create them.)

#S03D: Red Ryder 9.4--Powerful telecommunications program. Docs, utilities included.

#S04D: Aldus Freehand Demo--A Videoworks II interactive demonstration of Freehand drawing program.

#S05: Games #1--Banzai, Monopoly 4.0, ATC 4.0, Mines, New Daleks, Brickles 4.0

#S06D: Powerpoint Demo--(64K ROMs Compatible) Fully working demo version of this popular Mac program for planning, composing, and creating complete presentations.

#S07: Games #2--Space Bubbles, Stratego, Investigator #1, Towers of Hanoi, Marienbad.

#S08: Image Studio Demo--(Does not save) A photo retouching lab, modify digitized images in 65 grey scale levels.

#S09: Telecom #1--StuffIt 1.51, StuffIt Users Guide, Freeterm 2.0, Freeterm 2.0 Doc, TermWorks 1.3, Packet III v1.3.

#S10D: Stacks #1--Concentration, Hyper-Gunshy, Dinosaurs, AutoStack, Home 1.2.

#S11: Utility #1--MacEnv, Benchmark, DiskTimer II, SampleIt 1.21, SampleIt Docs, Apfont 3.2, HierDA, Fever, OnCue 1.3 DEMO, ScreenDump II, Findsweel 2.0 Demo

#S12D: Full Impact Demo--Great spreadsheet program. (No save feature.)

#S13D: Stacks #2--VisualStack, Chem Flash Cards, DisplayPict 1.4, Indigo Gets Out, AutCat, Animal Stack, Comic, OnTheBeach, Name That Plane.

#S14: Utility #2--Big Das runner, Mac II Icons, DiskParam, Utilities 1.5.1 Guide, UnstuffIt DA 1.5.1, Auto UnstuffIt Installer 1.5, Repair 1.2, ICON Designer, Viewer 1.5.1, SuperClock 3.1, SuperClock Doc ToMultiFinder, Interferon 3.1.

#S15: Games #3--Darts, MacCamelot, BricklesPlus, Gravitation 4.0, SwampLord

#S16: DAS #1--NekoDA, BezierDA and Docs, SnapShotDA 1.2, Adventure, VirusDetective, BreakKey, SysErrTableDA, PinUp Clock DA, Freemem, New Scrapbook DA

#S17: Sounds #1--SoundMaster w/22 sound files for use w/V1.9 of Spectre.

#S18: Graphics #1--1Dmata, DAfx 1.32, 3dEDIT, Fly Saver, Kaleidoscope, Optical, Pattern Blocks, Rae, Turbo View 1.01, MacPaint Shortcuts, Desktop Shortcuts.

#S19D: Hyper Utility #1--Deprotect Stack, XPICT, Moving Cursors Tutorial, Button Manager, Stack Compacter, Field Line Numberer, CardMover, Six Little Goodies, MH PowerScripts Sample, ShowDialog1.5.

#S20D: MacDraw II Demo--VideoWorks format provides tour of latest features.

#S21: Utility #3--File Scan, Jaws Icon, File Master Icon, File Monster Doc, SnapShot Installer, Black Hole 6.0.2, Looney Tunes Icons, Dog Trash Icon, Shredder Icon, UDS/M1.1, Virus RX 1.4a2, System Font. Some icon files require ResEdit for installation.

#S22: Sword of Siegfried--Graphics/text adventure (requires v1.9 of Spectre).

#S23: Sounds #2--Sound files may also be used w/SoundMaster on #S17. (10000 Marbles, Any Sound 1, Any Sound 2, Bad Disk 1, BVad Disk 2, Beep, Beep Sound 1, Disk Sounds 1-4, Don't Worry Be Happy, Ka-Chung!, Rolling Your Own, Type Key 1, Type Return 1, Type Space 1.)

#S24: Games #4--Dragon 2, Zonny, MazerLazer, and demo of ShufflePuck.

#S25D: MacMoney Demo--Personal finance program, prints but does not save.

#S26: Fkeys #1--23 fkeys and key related applications (Analog Clock, Clock, CopyDisk 3.0, Craps, F-KEY Installer, FadeKey, FileInfo, fkey, Fkey File Installer, Fkey-DA Sampler 2, FkeyView 2.5, FullMoon Calender, InfoKey, LaunchKey, MacAlmanac, Pipeline, ResCViewer 4.5, SafeLaunch 2.2, SpaceWarp, StripTease, Unpack, Ver Reader 3.0 and Windows.

#S27: Games #5--3D Checkers V2.0, Ballistics 2.0, Conternation 1.0, HangMan, Peg Puzzle Pak, UnBreakout.

#S28: Database Builder Demo--Fully working demo version of DAtabase Builder, a full-featured database (including graphics) all in a Desk Accessory.

#S29: Sounds #3--Talking Moose 1.21 and 9 sound resources for MacCD (#S23) or SoundMaster (#S17)--Archie, Bad Disk 3, Beep Sound 2, Disk Sound 5, Disk Sound 6, Key Click 1, Oh Yeaahh!, Mac Sound 1, and Startup Sound 1.

#S30: Utility #4--Init Cdev, Assassin, BundAid, Curse the Finder, Easy Icon, Finder Cursor Icons, Finder Icons, HD Mini-Icon, IconManager 1.1, JerryCan, Murphy Init, NeVR Init, ScrollIMBar CDev, System Icons+, Version Sleuth 1.0, What, and Windows.

#S31: DAS #2--Address Book 1.1.2 w/docs, Artist+ 2.01 w/docs, Blackjack, Calc 3.0, Calendar 1.7, Catch, dCAD 3.0 w/docs, DiskInfo 1.2, Maxwell 2.2a, MegaCalculator, SuperHelp w/docs, VirusDetective 2.2.1 w/docs, and windows.

#S32: VideoWorks w/Sound--6 VideoWorks animations w/player, sound resources, and MacinTalk (1 Mac to go, Apollo, Marbles, People Wall, ShortStop, and The Cauldron.)

#S33D: HyperUtility #2--13 utilities for use with HyperCard: GetString XFCN, HyperScrap, LockField, PluckString XFCN, Recover, Script Lister, Script Access, Stack Analyzer, Stak-X Demo, Unity, Virus Encyclopedia, XFCN miscellany, Zoomer XCFN).

#S34: Excel Templates #1--29 assorted files for use with Excel.

#S35D: HyperStacks #3--5 stacks for use with HyperCard or SuperCard: Atoms, Bird Stack II, Helicopter Stack, HyperlRA, Scan Stack 3.

#S36: Sounds #4--assorted sounds for use with SoundMaster (CN #S17) and a file that will change the system beep to other kinds of sounds. A Wish, I don't know, I know you are, Mecca jumbi, Need Input!, Un-acceptable, Ax Headroom, CheapBeep, Ayaaaah!, Boom!, aoooh, game over man, monkey, and vulcan mind.

#S37D: HyperStacks #4--StackArt Vol. 1 (100 clip art pics).

#S38: Games #6--Cairo Shootout 1.2a, Puzzl 1.1, and Stunt Copter 2.0.

#S39: Utility #5--Init Cdev 2.0, About Ionit Cdev 2.0, Moire Cdev, Moire Screen Saver Docs, Moire Cdev to Init, Hierda .9983, RAM check, SnapJot, SuperClock 3.4, Time-piece, Virus Detective 3.0.1, WInd Chooser 1.0.1, Why 1.0.1, and a fully working, but limited demo version of QuicKeys.

#S40D: HyperUtility #3--Christopher's XSTAK4, How a Virus Works, IConjurer, and Progress XCMD 1.1.

#S41: Productivity #1--Album Tracker 2.0.1, Amortize 2.4, Check Book 2.0, Road Atlas, and Smallview 1.3.

#S42: Productivity #2--Address List 15.2, BiPlane 1.0.1 (spreadsheet), Doctor 2.35 (makes self launching documents), and Mac Mailing 1.4S (a mail list program).

#S43: VideoWorks w/Sound #2--7 animation files with sound. Hello Amiga, MacPaint Vid, Movies 3, My1stVid, Trash, Vamp NY 1, and China Doll. Requires V1.0 or higher of Spectre.

#S44: Utility #6--Black Box 1.5, Complete Delete, Earth Init, FFDA Sampler, File Fixer, IconWrap Init, Macify 2.5, MacSpeed, Repair 1.4, Rescue, Scrolling Menu Installer, Shredder 6.0, SystemVersion, TextDiff, TFinder 2.2, ToMultiFinder 2.3, Vaccine 1.01, and Version Reader 2.2.

#S45: Graphics #2--MandelZot 1.4.1, Micro Swarm, Notebook 1.0, NoteNote5, PyreWorks, ScanPaint, SelectPaint, ViewPaint 1.7.

#S46: Everyman 1--A Graphics/text adventure created with WorldBuilder. Requires V1.9 or higher of Spectre.

#S47D/S48D: Phoenix--interactive adventure game based on the movies 2001 and 2010. Requires both disks. Requires Spectre V1.9 or higher and 2 DS drives or Hard disk.

#S49: Lawn Zapper--arcade type game has digitized sound and is quite addictive. (Requires V1.9 or higher of Spectre.)

#S50: Dungeons of Doom, V5.4--Interactive adventure game based on Dungeons and Dragons.

#S51D: PostScript Fonts #1--Archimedes Border, Bills' Dingbats, Classic Heavy, Classic Italic, Classic Roman, Draftman, Faust, Gordon, Style, Tiny Helvetica, and Toulouse Lautrec.

#S52: PostScript Fonts #2--Barcode39, Cunei, GE Laser, NModern Print Bold, Thomas, Tiffany Sample.

#S53D: Clip Art #1--12 pages of encapsulated postscript clip art in Pagemaker 3.0 format (requires Pagemaker 3.0 or later and UltraScript).

#S54: Games #7--Beast 1.0, MacBandit 1.2, MacNinja 1.0, Rock Paper Scissors.

#S55: Utility #7--Boomerang 2.0 2/docs, SuperClock 3.8 w/docs, FreshStart INIT, Kick the Can, Layout 1.9, MacEnvy 2.0 w/docs, Timepiece INIT, WatchInit 5.0, Wind-Chooser 1.12 CDEV w/docs.

#S56D: HyperStacks #4--a single 771K HyperCard Stack, entitled Bird Anatomy 1.2d, covers the basic anatomy of birds, flight, feathers, head, wings, ecology and more.

#S57: Utility #8--Complete Undelete demo, Disinfectant 1.6, FunKey, Speedometer 2.51, SysErrTable DA 2.5.

#S58D: Clip Art #2--66 pieces of scanned image clip art.

#S59: Sounds #5--Beam Up, Dog Do, Life Sentences, Mr. Ed, Soundmaster 1.3.1, SuperPlay 4.0, Zippy 2.0, MacinTalk.

#S60D: PostScript Fonts #3--Calligraphic Sample, Chester, Deuse, Louisville, Rodchenko.

#S61D: HyperStacks #5--Clip Art Sack 3, Crypto-Slate 1.6, Little Black Book, Periodic Table 1.0, Quick Compactor 2.0, SetVersion XCMD 1.0.

#S62D: PipeDream Demo--allows 1 or 2 players to play 3 different levels of the game, in beginner or expert modes.

#S63: Utilities No. 9--Alias, AltCDEF 1.2 and docs, AltWDEF 1.4.4 and 1.5.3 w/docs, Following and docs, MacEnvy 2.1 and docs, RAMDisk 1.1, and WindowShade and docs.

#S64D: PostScript Clip Art No. 1--EPS clip art files for use with UltraScript. Airplane, Beermug 1/2, Burst 1/2/3, Card 1/2, Clip 1/2, Face 1/2/3, FoodGroups, Hoop, Lamb, Piano, Pig, PalmTrees, Ribbon 1/2/3, Skyline, Sushi, Trophy, and Truck.

#S65D: HyperStacks No. 6--Calendar, Dot to Dot 2, HyperPaint, Project Planner, Script Searcher, The Aging Process, and World.

#S66: Games No. 8--Hedges and docs, MacYahtzee, MacMaze w/docs, Montana, Pentominoes, and Star Patrol.

#S67: Utilities No. 10--NeXT Folders (make your Mac folders like those found on the NeXT computer); Fish!V2.0 (turn Mac display into animated aquarium); Scroll2 2.0 (Control Panel/Startup document with twice the scrolling power); Fabulous Text Sucking Leech (open files and pull text out of the

data fork and put it into a text file); Cursor Animator 1.0 (animate your cursor in a variety of different ways.)

#S68: Games No. 9--Pits & Stones (pure strategy, you against the computer), Star-Roids 5.4.1 (w/digital sound, similar to Atari Asteroids game); Stellar Imperium 1.01 (space simulation); and Dragon V2.1 (a go-playing program).

#S69: Sounds No. 6--SoundMaster V1.4 & 16 sounds(Bad Disk4, Disk Request, Flush, Foom, Intellivoice, Lots of Input!, Mac II Beep, Moof, Ooh, Input!, Orgasm, Sorry Dave, SpamSound, That's All Folks!, Type Key 2, and Zoom Open).

#S70D: HyperStacks #7--Astronomy, Clip Art Stack 2, Crazy Icons, Famous People Clip Art, Icon Transfer Stack, Memory Information, New ResCopy XCMD, and Self-Modifying Stack).

#S71D: Shanghai Demo--demo version (no save or loading of previous game) of Shanghai 2.0 complete with sound.

#S72D: HyperStacks No.8--Area Codes Update, Auto Floppy Log 3.01, Chemist's Helper, Dot to Dot 3, Four Letter Words, Greylime Clock, Home Button Maker, HyperHpm 2.2, Magic 4 Cards, Patches, Roman Dates, and Valdemar.

#S73: Utilities No.11--Anonymity 1.0, Cursor Designer, Diamond 4.2 w/docs, PRAM 5.0, QuickFormat 6.2, MW/MD Launcher w/docs, SecureInit and docs, Take a Letter w/docs.

#S74: Sounds No.7--16 sound resources and the Finder Sounds CDEV. Beep Sound 3, Destination, Disk Eject, Disk Insert, Dit, Drag Off, Drag On, Files Done, Finder Sounds w/docs, New File, Rear2front, Resize, Shut Down Sound 2, Spanish Inquisition, Startup, Type Return 2, Type Space 2. (Finder Sounds require Finder 6.1.4.)

#S75: Games No.10--1863 V1.0, Billiards w/docs, Faulty Towers, Gobbler w/docs, Surgery.

#S76: StartUp Screens No.1--Screen Maker 1.0.1 plus Bat Logo, Batman, Bloom County, Farewell, HIT ANY KEY, How Much? Mac Magik, NeXT, Oldfinder, Square Wave, World Map, AJO Bird.

#S77: Graphics No.3--REL Converter, Banner Maker w/docs, Artistic, Fractal Mount w/docs, NavCom, RLE Utility w/docs, Snap 2.1, Sprio-Graft.

#S78: EPS Clip Art No.2--Art Week, Black Cat, Bow 2, Evergreen Tree, Halloween, Holiday Greetings, Horizontal Border, Ink Well, MenRet Month, Mod Border, Music in School, Vertical Border.

#S79: Utility No.12--Disinfectant 1.7 (virus detector and killer), InitCdev 3.0 w/docs, BackDrop w/docs, Facade w/docs, Fix Desktop w/docs, IconWrap 1.2, InSit?Delete w/docs, MenuTuner, Named Folder w/docs, Oliver's Buttons 1.0, Pointing Device, RAM Check w/docs, Toilet 6.0.3 w/docs, Trash Patch w/docs, UnScrolly w/docs.

#S80: PostScript Fonts No.4--Chi-

Town, Daytona, GE/RCA, SanSerif, and Tempo.

#S81D: Grendel 1.0--interactive graphics/text adventure game.

#S82D: HyperStacks No.9--Food Chain, HomeCheck, HyperIcons, Leisure Time, Month Calendar, StackMerge, StackScan, PhotoStack, Compress Plus, Virus Encyclopedia.

#S83: Utilities No.13--AntiPan (Anti Panic virus disinfectant), Compactor (compress your stacks), Disinfectant 1.8 (virus detection and repair utility), FileCloser, Kill-Scores (remove scores virus), Trash Patch V2 (change location of trash can).

#S84: Sounds No.8--Allrightee!, BBQ My Hamhocks, Einstein Turn Into, Getoutahere, Shutup Boy, Why You Little.

#S85D: EPS Clip Art No.3--Apple, Friendly Postman, Home Fix-Up Shopper, Ice Cream, Jazz Guys, Key Lime Pie Slice, Marching Band, Mercedes 190D, MicroPhone, Milk Pitcher/Cheese, Open Book, Pears, Satellite Dish, Scotty Dog, Sewn by Hand, Spaghetti & Salad, Star-Graphes, and Still Life w/Biscuits.

#S86D: Twilight Vale--Interactive graphics/text adventure game.

#S87: Utilities No.14--InitKit, InitScope, DiskKeeper 1.2, Front&Center 2.0, Set Paths.

#S88D: EPS Clip Art No.4--Anchor1/2, Border-FatRope, Border-Rope/Floats, Channel Marker, Compass Rose, Lighthouse/scene, Palm Tree 1 & 2, Palm Tree in wind, Palm Tree stylized, Tree/Moon, setting sun, Rope Spool, Sailboat, Sea/Palm Background, Sunset sailboat, Tropical Repeat.

#S89: HyperStacks No.10--Cursor Install, Custom.cursor, Food ClipArt Stack, Percentages, TidBits 90/7/16, TidBits 90/07/30, TimeTravel 1.5, TrigHype, VAPD Wheels, and Whales.

#S90D: Games No.11--Thieves, Haunted House, Toxic Ravine, Canfield, and Orbital Command.

#S91D: Utilities No.15--Disinfectant 2.1, Boomerang 2.0.2, Compactor 1.20o, Test Pattern.

#S92D: EPS Clip Art No.3--Airboat, Angelfish cartoon, Angelfish2, Dive Flag, Dive Mask, Diver-OK, Fish-Snorkler, Flamingo Silhouette #2, Hermit Crab, Limes, Mangroves, Mermaid, Octopus Cartoon, Paradise Island, Pelican, Pelican/Moonlight, Sailboat2, School of Fish, Seahorse2, Shark, Snowy Egret, and Turtle.

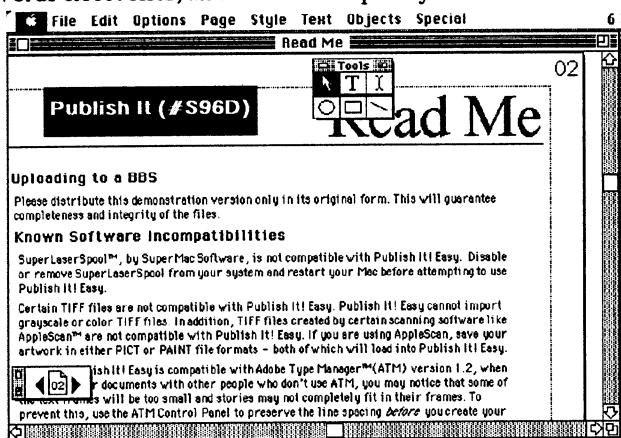
#S93D: Games No.12--MackJack 4.0, Baker's Dozen 2.0, LogoDaedalus, Mombasa 1.1, and uNebraska.

#S94: Sounds No.9--Bad Old Puty Tat!, Bark, Beat, Computers, Cool!, Hey, R2D2#1, R2D2#2, Reboot, Strings, and Vacuum Cleaner.

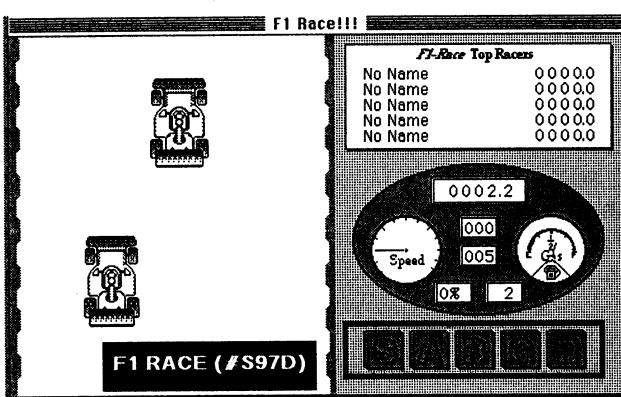
#S95: Startup Screens No.2--Screen-Maker 1.0.1 plus 11 screens: Bart, Bartman, Be Like a Duck, CIA, Dick Tracy, DOS?, Ebbet's Field, Fun, Graduate, Joker, and Polo Grounds.

NEW FOR DECEMBER

#S96D: PublishIt Easy Demo-fully working demo prints and saves documents. It comes with a hyphenation dictionary; imports EPS, MacWrite, Word, Text, TIFF and WordPerfect files; and several sample layout demo files.



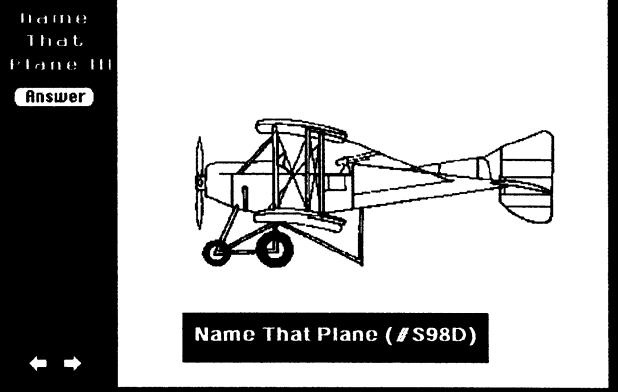
#S97D: Games #13--Eliza, GodGame, MacNinja 3.0, Video Poker for Fun, and F1 Race.



#S98D: HyperStacks No.11--Calendar Maker, Clip Art Stack 5 (51 pieces of clipart), Demo Balloon Animal Stack, GNC Railroad Tour, And Name That Plane 3 (with 87 new planes).



#S99D: Utilities No.16--Disinfectant 2.3, Designer-Draw, GooPanel Init plus Docs, Iconia 6.3, Mouse Odometer Init plus Docs, Unstuffit Deluxe 1.1, Glue Viewer and WizzyFonts plus Docs.



#S100: Stuffit Classic 1.6--fully supports Stuffit Deluxe and Stuffit 1.5.1 archives. Like Stuffit Deluxe, Stuffit Classic is extensible, so there are many features that can be added by simply dropping files into the system folder

CN disks are \$4 each (10 for \$35) plus \$1 s/h for every 6 disks. Order from CN Library, 122 N. Johnson Rd, Sterling, VA 22170 (703) 450-4761.

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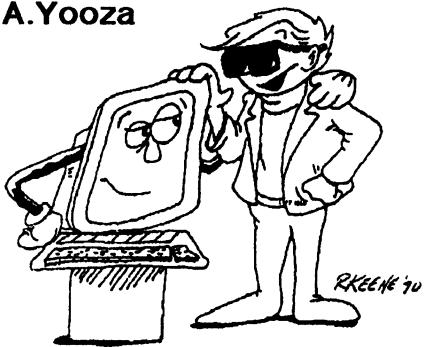
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Grants Pass, OR 97526





A.Yooza



Welcome to the first installment of "A.Yooza," a creation of mine that Joe Waters is kind enough to let me try out in this issue of *Current Notes*.

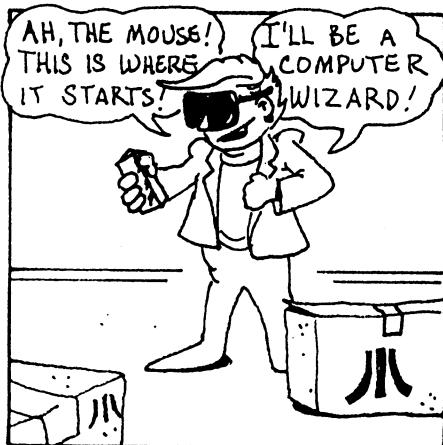
Yooza is the computer user that we've all been at one time or another. There have been other comic strips involving computer users and even anthropomorphic computers. (Bloom County immediately comes to mind.) This one is different because the user owns an Atari, something we can all relate to. (If anybody knows of a

strip dealing specifically with a living ST, let me know.)

In addition to the strip, I will occasionally be writing an article about graphics on the ST. I won't be reviewing any new software since there are writers far more qualified at reviewing than I am. Instead, I'll tell you how I use the ST for graphics in my daily work and then I can pass on some of the experience and shortcuts I've acquired. Hopefully, the work I've done using the ST will be of some interest. For instance, during the past six months there has been a comic from Piranha Press, an arm of DC comics, that has been a title on the shelf called "Invaders From Home," written and drawn by John Blair Moore. A wallpaper design was needed for the cover that would be used as a background for all six issues. Of course, I used the ST to create the design. It was a natural for a repeating pattern such as wallpaper. When DC asked me

how the credit should read, I specifically made mention of the ST and Migraph's *Easy Draw* and er, to please spell my name correctly. This resulted in a free plug for ST computers for six consecutive months in a non-computer related magazine. The title sells well due to Moore's uncanny writing and drawing ability and I'm not sure if any STs were sold because of that plug, but it didn't hurt. In fact, several people at DC asked me about the computer, and two people who contribute work there now own STs.

Until next time, if anybody has a graphics related question he would like answered, please feel free to drop me a line in care of *Current Notes* and I'll do my best to answer it the following month. Also, if anybody has a humorous anecdote about the ST, please let me know and I'll include it in the strip. For your effort you'll receive a free PD disk from the CN library.



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month's Letters To The Editor will show me how well I did, ok?

What's coming out of the keyboard unit is just MIDI data. It's saying, "Key down this hard ... key down harder... key let up," and which key it is of the hundred-odd on the keyboard. Sure, any number of keys can be down at one time.

Jimmy made the visionary step of COMPLETELY disconnecting the keyboard from any musical "standard." For instance, he didn't force the keyboard to act like a regular piano at all. Instead, he adopted an object-oriented approach, and made each pad fully programmable in function--and each pad able to program other pads!

Object orientation is a new and hot trend in software engineering. The latest buzzwords are "data encapsulation" and "hierarchy inheritance" and so forth, if you're into reading computer journals. It ought to tell you something that Hotz came up with this approach *completely independently*; he doesn't know what "object oriented" even means. He's a musician, not a computer type, see?

I could just say things like "this affords you unlimited power," but it wouldn't convey anything! So, instead, let me step you through a few examples of the power of this approach.

There are four horizontal rows of keypads on the machine, which each resemble a piano keyboard. There are ridges between keys to separate them.

Let's program the four rows of keypads like this. The lower three rows are different instruments; for now, let's make them rhythm, bass, and electric guitar sounds. The uppermost keyboard is *chords*. For instance, press the leftmost key, and you'll shift into the key of E and play a complete E major chord--with one keypress, not three or four as a chord usually requires.

By pressing that one key, you've shifted the other three key-

pad row's functions. They are now "in the key of E." You cannot play a note off the key of E.

In practical terms--remember playing with a piano, struggling to pick out a song? Remember how awful wrong notes sounded? That's because they were out of key; in that key's musical structure, you're not supposed to play such notes. The Hotz box software, if you ask it to, will prevent you from doing it.

Thus you can run up and down the keypads of the three instruments, improvising to your heart's content, *and it all sounds wonderful*. You can only simulate this on a piano with difficulty.

Okay, press the second key up there. This shifts to A minor. Again, all the other keypads are reprogrammed (in 2 milliseconds) to A minor. Again, you just can't goof. Want to play a nice sounding chord? Mash any three or four keys. It'll sound great. Third key? D chord. Same thing.

And with those chords, you are now able to play the riff from "Long Time," from the band Boston, that you've always wanted to play but were never technically fast enough to play before. Or the awful, some-weirdo-key "Foreplay," which to me is the most fully turned-on rock and roll song ever written. (Check it out. Boston, first album.) I can barely pick out Foreplay with all its flats and sharps, taking seconds for each key, when I use a piano; I just switch the Hotz box to the right key, and start zapping the song out.

I now hear musicians complaining, so let me answer the complaints.

No, you're not "stuck" on-key. You can go off key if you wish. Jimmy has supplied "pitch benders," programmable to any key (I have to keep saying that). One bends a note up a long way, one down a long way, one adds tremolo. (Vibrato is possible as well). Thus, yes, you CAN go off key if you wish. But it takes experience to know where going offkey will sound good. (Neil Young appears to have

made a deep study of it, from nearly all of his albums.)

It is not even slightly restricting to have a keyboard that "Can't play certain notes." Those are the notes that get in your way when you're trying to play! They are the notes that you have to struggle to avoid on a regular piano. I find it incredibly liberating to work with the Hotz box. I can pick out songs far more quickly and easily, because I don't have off-scale notes to worry about, and the whole process is far, far more intuitive than a piano or guitar; I play both moderately badly. This is music as it *should be*, that only modern computer technology can provide.

Okay, let's say you want to play along with a song. That's fine. With Hotz Coding, a song can have simple codes attached to it that tell the Hotz software where to change keys, and to what note. (An entire CD can be coded in about 64K bytes; a CD holds about 600 megabytes of data. 64K bytes is not even noticeable in that size a media).

Folks, look, I'm so excited about this thing because I *saw* it work. I saw a woman who was blind, who wasn't that much into the piano ("too frustrating"), play the Hotz box like a wizard after a few minute's orientation. She was improvising on "The Planets," a beautiful classical piece--and she was doing very well. (As I watched this, I watched people around me. Jaws were sagging open; there was a hush in the room you would not believe.)

Jimmy demonstrated both "Stairway to Heaven," for us rock fans, and the above classical piece, with Hotz coding, playing from a video tape. It was amazing watching the computer display shifting chords, and the keyboard moving right along with them. For you MIDI whizzes, yes, the software is smart enough to "pick up" an illegal key when changing chords.

It gets better. Hotz has accumulated one of the largest libraries

of online musical knowledge in the country in his software. (\$200. Antic magazine's software division.) He has every weird chord from the basics—major and minor—to stuff like minor-seventh diminished eighth with vibrato. The list of possible keys takes a long time to scroll through at full speed.

This library, and all the hours of work that went into researching it, represents awesome power. For instance, you can literally play *any key combination* at all on this machine, just looking for the *sound* you want, not sweating off-scale keys or anything. Once you find the sound that's great, you can then have the Hotz software tell you exactly what chord you just played, in standard musical notation. It can find either chords "close by" or chords "exactly matching," in a split second.

You can do research into *how music works* with this software. It contains amazing displays of how music really works—for instance, what makes a major chord sound the way it does. I can't think of a finer educational tool for music; it is so instant, and so intuitive, you'll find out amazing things. If you attended tedious classes on music theory, and only dimly remember things like "Circle of Fifths" that underlie music, you want this software. I played the first few notes to "Stairway to Heaven," looked them up, and for the first time in my life, learned the chord they were part of.

The Hotz Box is to music as the GEM/Mac desktop is to computers. Instead of typing some command, you just grab a file and throw it away, or copy it, right? Well, on the Hotz box, you apply the same intuitive process to music. No more tedious learning of scales (and I can personally tell you, they are **TEDIOUS** to learn and practice; the cry of "David, practice your scales!" resounded through the Small household when I was young). No more wondering why Neil Young's minor-key songs (everything of his seems to be minor key) sound the

way they are; it's because this note is shifted from here from the major scale, see? Right on the computer display.

Some of the people attending this conference were skilled musicians, and tried some tough questions (especially when they thought, as Atari marketing does, that this is just a dumb never-play-off-key device). Could it do pentatonic scales, or non pentatonic? I saw Middle Eastern and Japanese scales loaded and played in moments, which are utterly different from the musical system you're probably used to. Can it do dissonance? Yes, just select a dissonant chord. Can it pitch-bend? Yes. Is it velocity sensitive (in other words, do keys sound different when you hit them hard versus soft?) Playing a MIDI drum machine quickly answered that question "yes"—and brought a request to "turn it down!" from the next room. The respect from the pro musicians spread very quickly.

I mean, people, when I saw this device at Summer NAMM, I was amazed. Sandy saw That Look in my eyes and bought one. But I always secretly wondered—is this just me? Is it just because I'm a musical klutz that I think it's great? After seeing the pros get equally excited about the machine, I'm not wondering anymore.

Atari

The champion and chief excitee of the Hotz box at Atari is Leonard Tramiel. Leonard has a grasp of object orientation, and sees the potential of this device, in playing, playing along, education, handicapped use, and other places.

Remember 1985, when the ST was new and exciting? Remember the 1040 ST making the cover of Byte magazine, the first computer ever to give a megabyte of memory for under \$1,000? The same aura of breakthrough technology surrounds the Hotz Box.

Atari needs to consumerize the unit, which I hear Jack Tramiel is

supposed to be good at. \$5,500 is obviously way too high, but look, that's for a ruggedized, for-the-rock-tour unit. (I saw and heard one at Fleetwood Mac's concert this summer.) Get the price down, get the marketing department focused on this device's power, and Atari will have something *really hot*. It's waiting to happen.

Look, people enjoy music. That's why we have radios. They enjoy playing it themselves when it isn't incredibly frustrating and doesn't require years of dedicated practice to achieve. The Hotz box and software are the technology that can make it happen.

As one Very Famous Hacker/Writer from The Biggest Computer Magazine put it, "The violin is a failure from a human interface design aspect; this provable because so few people learn to play it!" The Hotz box provides the simplicity that only shows up when a true genius is at work. My hat's off to Jimmy Hotz, folks.

Right offhand, I visualize a single keyboard unit, with one row of keypads, plus a few extra pads for pitchbend, and an LCD display (perhaps a Lynx display, hint hint?) to program it, in an inexpensive consumer package, able to output either MIDI or some built-in sounds. Many companies make fine sound chips able to output "good enough" sound, and MIDI would be there for top quality.

Conclusion

Atari may not have much respect from a computer world obsessed with Intel 80386 chips (e.g., fast IBM clones). However, it is well known and respected in the MIDI market. The company is in an excellent position to market this device to the consumer, make a great deal of money, and set an object-oriented music standard for the 90's. Jimmy Hotz has vision that's been a bit lacking at Atari. (Nor is the Hotz box the extent of his vision by far, but that's another column.)

The Hotz unit is in limited production right now, but can be purchased; professional musicians are snapping them up as fast as they're built. (Look for one on the Arsenio Hall show band.) This unit, even at that price, is IN DEMAND, and a lower priced, consumer unit would be even more in demand. Everyone I've shown my unit to is just blown away.

The "experts" can pontificate on the future of the TT and ST, and the new MEGA STE; I darn well know that the Hotz Box could potentially outsell the computer division combined. (No? Look at how many people aren't interested in either a non-IBM clone computer, or in any computer at all--but still play a Casio keyboard at home.) Let's give them a serious keyboard capable of serious new stuff with the Hotz technology.

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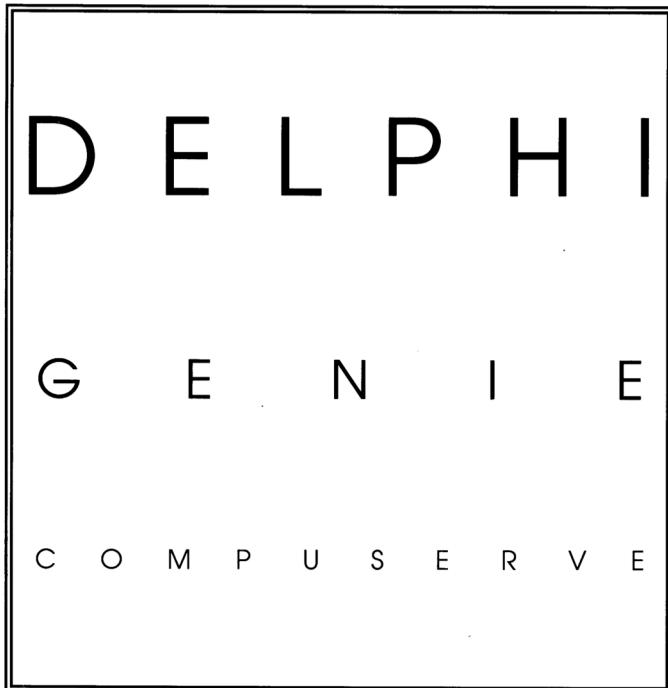
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